

1490.aa.22

# CARACTACUS

A

Dramatic Poem.

Mason (William) Poet



Dramatic Poem.



# CARACTACUS,

A

## Dramatic Poem:

Written on the MODEL of

### The Ancient GREEK Tragedy.

By the Author of ELFRIDA.

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Misimus & lectas Druidum de gente Chorëas.

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THE THIRD EDITION.

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LONDON:

Printed for J. KNAPTON, R. and J.  
DODSLEY, and R. HORSFIELD.

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MDCCLX.

CARACTACUS

A

Drama



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The Ancient Greek Tragedy

By the Author of L. E. M. D. A.

Millions of copies printed in Great Britain

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MCCCLX.

# The Rev<sup>d</sup> Mr HURD.

## E L E G Y.

**F**RRIEND of my youth, who, when the willing  
Muse

Stream'd o'er my breast her warm poetic rays,  
Saw't the fresh seeds their vital powers diffuse,  
And fed't them with the soft'ring dew of praise!  
Whate'er the produce of th' unthrifty soil,

The leaves, the flowers, the fruits, to thee belong:  
The labourer earns the wages of his toil;

Who form'd the Poet, well may claim the song.  
Yes, 'tis my pride to own, that taught by thee

My conscious soul superior flights essay'd;  
Learnt from thy lore the Poet's dignity,

And spurn'd the hirelings of the rhyming trade.  
Say, scenes of Science, say, thou haunted stream!

[For oft' my Muse-led steps did'st thou behold]  
How on thy banks I rifled every theme,

That Fancy fabled in her age of gold.  
How oft' I cry'd, "O come, thou tragic Queen!"

"March from thy Greece with firm majestic  
"treadd

"Such as when Athens saw thee fill her scene,

"When Sophocles thy choral Graces led:



" Saw thy proud pall it's purple length devolve,  
 " Saw thee uplift the glitt'ring dagger high,  
 " Ponder with fixed brow thy deep resolve  
 " Prepar'd to strike, to triumph, and to die.  
 " Bring then to Britain's plain that choral throng,  
 " Display thy buskin'd pomp, thy golden lyre,  
 " Give her historic forms the soul of song,  
 " And mingle Attic art with Shakespear's fire."  
 " Ah what fond boy, dost thou presume to claim?"  
 The Muse reply'd. " Mistaken suppliant, know,  
 " To light in Shakespear's breast the dazzling flame  
 " Exhausted all Parnassus could bestow.  
 " True; Art remains; and, if from his bright page  
 " Thy mimic power one vivid beam can seize,  
 " Proceed; and in that best of tasks engage,  
 " Which tends at once to profit, and to please."  
 She spake; and Harewood's Towers spontaneous  
 rose;  
 Soft virgin warblings echo'd thro' the grove;  
 And fair Elfrida pour'd forth all her woes,  
 The hapless pattern of connubial Love.  
 More awful scenes old Mona next display'd;  
 Her caverns gloom'd, her forests wav'd on high,  
 While flam'd within their consecrated shade  
 The Genius stern of British liberty.  
 And see, my HURD! to thee those scenes con-  
 sign'd;  
 O! take and stamp them with thy honour'd name.  
 Around the page be friendship's chaplet twin'd;  
 And, if they find the road to honest Fame,

Perchance the candour of some nobler age  
 May praise the Bard, who bad gay Folly bear  
 \* Her cheap applauses to the busy stage  
 And leave him pensive Virtue's silent tear;  
 Chose too to consecrate his fav'rite strain  
 To Him, who grac'd by ev'ry liberal art,  
 That best might shine amid the learned train,  
 Yet more excell'd in morals, and in heart:  
 Whose equal mind could see vain fortune shower  
 Her flimsy favours on the fawning crew,  
 While in low Thurcaston's sequester'd bower  
 She fixt him distant from Promotion's view:  
 Yet, shelter'd there by calm Contentment's wing;  
 Pleas'd he could smile, and with sage HOOKER'S  
 eye  
 † " See from his mother earth God's blessings  
 spring  
 " And eat his bread in peace and privacy."

20 March 1759.

W. MASON.

\* Nil equidem feci (tu scis hoc ipse) Theatris;  
 Musa nec in plausu ambiosa meares.  
 Ovid. Trist. Lib. V. El. vii. 23.

† Part of a sentence in a letter of Hooker to Archbishop Whitgift. See his Life in the Biographia Britannica.

[ vi ]

Purchase the candour of some rubler age  
 May brand the Bard, who had gay Folly bear  
 \* Her cheap applauses to the puff stage  
 And leave him passive Victim's silent ear;

**Persons of the D R A M A.**

To Him, who grac'd by every liberal art,

**AULUS DIDIUS, the Roman General.**

**VELLINUS,**

**Sons of Carismandua.**

**ELIDURUS,**

**\* CHORUS of Druids and Bards.**

**CARACTACUS.**

**EVELINA, Daughter to Caractacus.**

**ARVIRAGUS, Son to Caractacus.**

20 March 1750.  
**Scene, MONA.**

\* The Dramatic part of the Chorus is supposed to be spoken by the chief Druid; the lyrical part sung by the Bards.





# CARACTACUS,

A

## Dramatic Poem.

AULUS DIDIUS, with Romans.

**T**HIS is the secret centre of the isle :  
Here, Romans, pause, and let the eye of  
wonder

Gaze on the solemn scene ; behold yon oak,  
How stern he frowns, and with his broad brown arms  
Chills the pale plain beneath him : mark yon altar,  
The dark stream brawling round it's rugged base,  
These cliffs, these yawning caverns, this wide circus,  
Skirted with unhewn stone : they awe my soul,  
As if the very Genius of the place  
Himself appear'd, and with terrific tread  
Stalk'd thro' his drear domain. And yet, my friends,  
(If shapes like his be but the fancy's coinage)  
Surely there is a hidden power, that reigns  
'Mid the lone majesty of untam'd nature,  
Controuling sober reason ; tell me else,  
Why do these haunts of barb'rous superstition  
O'ercome me thus ? I scorn them, yet they awe me.  
Call forth the British Princes : in this gloom  
I mean to school them to our enterprize.

*Enter Vellinus and Elidurus.*

B

AULUS DIDIUS, VELLINUS,  
ELIDURUS.

Ye pledges dear of Cartismandua's faith,  
Approach ! and to my uninstructed ear  
Explain this scene of horror.

ELIDURUS.

Daring Roman,  
Thy footsteps press on consecrated ground :  
These mighty piles of magic-planted rock,  
Thus rang'd in mystic order, mark the place  
Where but at times of holiest festival  
The Druid leads his train.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Where dwells the seer ?

VELLINUS.

In yonder shaggy cave ; on which the moon  
Now sheds a side-long gleam. His brotherhood  
Possess the neighb'ring cliffs.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Yet up the hill  
Mine eye descrys a distant range of caves,  
Delv'd in the ridges of the craggy steep :  
And this way still another.

ELIDURUS.

On the left  
Reside the Sages skill'd in Nature's lore :  
The changeful universe, it's numbers, powers,  
Studious they measure, save when meditation  
Gives place to holy rites : then in the grove  
Each hath his rank and function. Yonder grotts  
Are tenanted by Bards, who nightly thence,



## C A R A C T A C U S.

3

Rob'd in their flowing vests of innocent white,  
Descend, with harps that glitter to the moon,  
Hymning immortal strains. The spirits of air,  
Of earth, of water, nay of heav'n itself,  
Do listen to their lay : and oft, 'tis said,  
In visible shapes dance they a magic round  
To the high minstrelsy. Now, if thine eye  
Be sated with the view, haste to thy ships ;  
And ply thine oars ; for, if the Druids learn  
This bold intrusion, thou wilt find it hard  
To foil their fury.

## A U L U S D I D I U S.

Prince, I did not moor  
My light-arm'd shallops on this dangerous strand,  
To sooth a fruitless curiosity :  
I come in quest of proud Caractacus ;  
Who, when our veterans put his troops to flight,  
Found refuge here.

## E L I D U R U S.

If here the Monarch rests,  
Presumptuous Chief ! thou might'st as well essay  
To pluck him from yon stars : Earth's ample range  
Contains no surer refuge : underneath  
The soil we tread, a hundred secret paths,  
Scoop'd thro' the living rock in winding maze,  
Lead to as many caverns, dark, and deep :  
'Mid which the hoary sages act their rites  
Mysterious, rites of such strange potency,  
As, done in open day, would dim the sun,



## C A R A C T A C U S.

Tho' thron'd in noontide brightness. In such dens  
He may for life lie hid.

AULUS DIDIUS.

We know the task  
Most difficult: yet has thy royal mother  
Furnish'd the means.

ELIDURUS.

My mother sayst thou, Roman?

AULUS DIDIUS.

In proof of that firm faith she lends to Rome,  
She gave ye up her honour's hostages.

ELIDURUS.

She did: and we submit.

AULUS DIDIUS.

To Rome we bear ye;  
From your dear country bear ye; from your joys,  
Your loves, your friendships, all your souls hold  
precious.

ELIDURUS.

And dost thou taunt us, Roman, with our fate?

AULUS DIDIUS.

No, Youth, by heav'n, I would avert that fate.  
Wish ye for liberty?

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS.

More than for life.

AULUS DIDIUS.

And would do much to gain it?

VELLINUS.

Name the task.

AULUS DIDIDIUS.

The task is easy. Haste ye to these Druids :  
Tell them ye come, commission'd by your Queen,  
To seek the great Caractacus ; and call  
His valour to her aid, against the Legions,  
Which, led by our Ostorius, now assail  
Her frontiers. The late treaty she has seal'd  
Is yet unknown : and this her royal signet,  
Which more to mask our purpose was obtain'd,  
Shall be your pledge of faith. The eager king  
Will gladly take the charge ; and, he consenting,  
What else remains, but to the Meinai's shore  
Ye lead his credulous step ? there will we seize him :  
Bear him to Rome, the substitute for you,  
And give you back to freedom.

VELLINUS.

If the Druids —

AULUS DIDIDIUS.

If they, or he, prevent this artifice,  
Then force must take it's way : then flaming brands,  
And biting axes, wielded by our soldiers,  
Must level these thick shades ; and so unlodge  
The lurking savage.

ELIDURUS.

Gods, shall Mona perish ?

AULUS DIDIDIUS.

Princes, her ev'ry trunk shall on the ground  
Measure it's magnitude ; unless, ere dawn,  
Ye lure this untam'd lion to our toils.  
Go then, and prosper ; I shall to the ships,

And there expect his coming. Youths, remember,  
He must to Rome to grace great Cæsar's triumph:  
Cæsar and Fate demand him at your hands.

*Exeunt Aulus Didius and Romans.*

### ELIDURUS, VELLINUS.

And will heav'n suffer it? Will the just gods,  
That tread yon spangled pavement o'er our heads,  
Look from their sky and yield him? Will these  
Druids,

Their sage vicegerents, not call down the thunder;  
And will not instant it's hot bolts be darted  
In such a righteous cause? Yes, good old king,  
Yes, last of Britons, thou art heav'n's own pledge;  
And shalt be such 'till death.

### VELLINUS.

What means my brother,  
Dost thou refuse the charge?

### ELIDURUS.

Dost thou accept it?

### VELLINUS.

It gives us liberty.

### ELIDURUS.

It makes us traytors.

Gods, would Vellinus do a deed of baseness?

### VELLINUS.

Will Elidurus scorn the profer'd boon  
Of freedom?

### ELIDURUS.

Yes, when such it's guilty price,  
Brother, I spurn it.



C A R A C T A C U S.

7

VELLINUS.

Go then, foolish boy!  
I'll do the deed myself.

ELIDURUS.

It shall not be:  
I will proclaim the fraud.

VELLINUS.

Wilt thou? 'tis well.  
Hie to yon cave; call loudly on the Druid;  
And bid him drag to ignominious death  
The partner of thy blood. Yet hope not thou  
To 'scape; for thou didst join my impious steps:  
Therefore his wrath shall curse thee: thou shalt  
live;  
Yet shalt thou live an interdicted wretch,  
All rights of nature cancell'd.

ELIDURUS.

O Vellinus!  
Rend not my soul: by heav'n thou know'st I love  
thee,  
As fervently as brother e'er lov'd brother:  
And, loving thee, I thought I lov'd mine honour.  
Ah! do not wake, dear youth, in this true breast  
So fierce a conflict.

VELLINUS.

Honour's voice commands  
Thou shouldst obey thy mother, and thy queen.  
Honour and sage religion both conspire  
To bid thee save these consecrated groves  
From Roman devastation.

ELIDURUS.

Horrid thought !

Hence let us haste, ev'n to the furthest nook  
Of this wide isle ; nor view the sacrilege.

VELLINUS.

No, let us stay, and by our prosperous art  
Prevent the sacrilege. Mark me, my brother,  
More years and more experience have matur'd  
My sober thought ; I will convince thy youth,  
That this our deed has ev'ry honest sanction  
Cool reason may demand.

ELIDURUS.

To Rome with reason :  
Try if 'twill bring her deluging ambition  
Into the level course of right and justice :  
Try if 'twill tame these insolent invaders ;  
Who thus, in savageness of conquest, claim  
Whom chance of war has spar'd. Do this, and  
prosper.

But, pray thee, do not reason from my soul  
It's inbred honesty : that holy flame,  
Howe'er eclips'd by Rome's black influence  
In vulgar minds, ought still to glow in ours.

VELLINUS.

Vain talker leave me.

ELIDURUS.

No, I will not leave thee :  
I must not, dare not, in these perilous shades.  
Think, if thy fraud should fail, these holy men,  
How will their justice rend thy trait'rous limbs ?  
If thou succeed'st, the fiercer pangs of conscience,

# C A R A C T A C U S.

9

How will they ever goad thy guilty soul?  
 Mercy, defend us! see, the awful Druids  
 Are issuing from their caves: hear'st thou yon signal?  
 Lo, on the instant all the mountain whitens  
 With slow-descending Bards. Retire, retire;  
 This is the hour of sacrifice: to stay  
 Is death.

V E L L I N U S.

I'll wait the closing of their rites  
 In yonder vale: do thou, as likes thee best,  
 Betray, or aid me.

E L I D U R U S.

To betray thee, youth,  
 That love forbids; honour, alas! to aid thee.

*Exeunt.*

Enter C H O R U S.

S E M I C H O R U S.

Sleep and Silence reign around;  
 Not a night-breeze wakes to blow;  
 Circle, sons, this holy ground;  
 Circle close, in triple row;  
 And, if mask'd in vapors drear,  
 Any earth-born Spirit dare  
 To hover round this sacred space,  
 Haste with light spells the murky foe to chase.  
 Lift your boughs of vervain blue,  
 Dipt in cold September dew;  
 And dash the moisture chaste, and clear,  
 O'er the ground, and thro' the air.  
 Now the place is purg'd and pure.

C



Brethren! say, for this high hour  
 Are the milk-white steers prepar'd?  
 Whose necks the rude yoke never scar'd,  
 To the furrow yet unbroke?  
 For such must bleed beneath yon oak.

## S E M I C H O R U S.

Druid, these, in order meet,  
 Are all prepar'd.

## S E M I C H O R U S.

But tell me yet,  
 Cadwall! did thy step profound  
 Dive into the cavern deep,  
 Twice twelve fathom under ground,  
 Where our sage fore-fathers sleep?  
 Thence with reverence hast thou born,  
 From the consecrated chest,  
 The golden sickle, scrip, and vest,  
 Whilom by old Belinus worn?

## S E M I C H O R U S.

Druid, these, in order meet,  
 Are all prepar'd.

## S E M I C H O R U S.

But tell me yet,  
 From the grot of charms and spells,  
 Where our matron sister dwells,  
 Brennus! has thy holy hand  
 Safely brought the druid wand?  
 And the potent adder-stone,  
 Gender'd 'fore th' autumnal moon?  
 When, in undulating twine,

## C A R A C T A C U S.

11

The foaming snakes prolific join ;  
 When they hiss, and when they bear  
 Their wond'rous egg aloof in air ;  
 Thence, before to earth it fall,  
 The Druid, in his hallow'd pall,  
 Receives the prize ;  
 And instant flies,  
 Follow'd by th' envenom'd brood,  
 'Till he cross the crystal flood.

## S E M I C H O R U S.

Druid, these, in order meet,  
 Are all prepar'd.

## S E M I C H O R U S.

Then all's compleat.  
 And now let nine of the selected band,  
 Whose greener years besit such station best,  
 With wary circuit pace around the grove :  
 And guard each inlet ; watchful, lest the eye  
 Of busy curiosity profane  
 Pry on our rites : which now must be as close  
 As done i'th' very central womb of earth.  
 Occasion claims it ; for Caractacus  
 This night demands admission to our train.  
 He, once our king, while ought his power avail'd  
 To save his country from the rod of tyrants ;  
 That duty past, does wisely now retire  
 To end his days in secrecy and peace ;  
 Druid with Druids, in this chief of groves,  
 Ev'n in the heart of Mona. See, he comes !  
 How awful is his port ! mark him, my friends !

He looks, as doth the tower, whose nodding walls,  
 After the conflict of heav'n's angry bolts,  
 Frown with a dignity unmark'd before,  
 Ev'n in it's prime of strength. Health to the king!

C A R A C T A C U S, E V E L I N A,  
 C H O R U S.

This holy place, methinks, doth this night wear  
 More than it's wonted gloom: Druid, these groves  
 Have caught the dismal colouring of my soul,  
 Changing their dark dun garbs to very fable,  
 In pity to their guest. Hail, hallow'd oaks!  
 Hail, British born! who, last of British race,  
 Hold your primæval rights by nature's charter;  
 Not at the nod of Cæsar. Happy foresters,  
 Ye wave your bold heads 'mid the liberal air;  
 Nor ask, for privilege, a prætor's edict.  
 Ye, with your tough and intertwisted roots,  
 Grasp the firm rocks ye sprung from; and, erect  
 In knotty hardihood, still proudly spread  
 Your leafy banners 'gainst the tyrannous north,  
 Who Roman like assails you. Tell me, Druid,  
 Is it not better to be such as these,  
 Than be the thing I am?

C H O R U S.

To be the thing,  
 Eternal wisdom wills, is ever best.

C A R A C T A C U S.

But I am lost to that predestin'd use  
 Eternal wisdom will'd, and fitly therefore



# C A R A C T A C U S.

13

May wish a change of being. I was born,  
A king; and Heav'n, who bade these warrior oaks  
Lift their green shields against the fiery sun,  
To fence their subject plain, did mean, that I  
Should, with as firm an arm, protect my people,  
Against the pestilent glare of Rome's ambition.  
I fail'd; and how I fail'd, thou know'st too well;  
So does the babbling world: and therefore, Druid,  
I would be any thing save what I am.

## C H O R U S.

See, to thy wish, the holy rites prepar'd,  
Which, if heav'n frown not, consecrate thee Druid:  
See to the altar's base the victims led,  
From whose free-gushing blood ourself shall read  
It's high behests; which if assenting found,  
These hands around thy chosen limbs shall wrap  
The vest of sanctity; while at the act  
Yon white-rob'd bards, sweeping their solemn harps,  
Shall lift their choral warblings to the skies,  
And call the gods to witness. Mean while, Prince,  
Bethink thee well if ought on this vain earth  
Still holds too firm an union with thy soul,  
Estranging it from peace.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

I had a queen:  
Bear with my weakness, Druid! this tough breast  
Must heave a sigh, for she is unreveng'd.  
And can I taste true peace, she unreverig'd?  
So chaste, so lov'd a queen? ah, Evelina!

Hang not thus weeping on the feeble arm  
That cou'd not save thy mother.

E V E L I N A.

To hang thus  
Softens the pang of grief; and the sweet thought,  
That a fond father still supports his child,  
Sheds, on my pensive mind, such soothing balm;  
As doth the blessing of these pious seers,  
When most they wish our welfare. Would to heav'n  
A daughter's presence could as much avail,  
To ease her father's woes, as his doth mine.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Ever most gentle! come unto my bosom:  
Dear pattern of the precious prize I lost,  
Lost, so inglorious lost; my friends, these eyes  
Did see her torn from my defenceless camp;  
Whilst I, hemm'd round by squadrons, could not  
save her:

My boy, still nearer to the darling pledge,  
Beheld her shrieking in the ruffian's arm;  
Beheld, and fled.

E V E L I N A.

Ah! Sir, forbear to wound  
My brother's fame; he fled, but to recall  
His scatter'd forces to pursue and save her.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Daughter, he fled. Now, by yon gracious moon,  
That rising saw the deed, and instant hid  
Her blushing face in twilight's dusky veil,  
The flight was parricide.

## EVELINA.

Indeed, indeed,  
 I know him valiant; and not doubt he fell  
 'Mid slaughter'd thousands of the haughty foe,  
 Victim to filial love. Arviragus,  
 Thou hadst no sister near the bloody field,  
 Whose sorrowing search, led by yon orb of night,  
 Might find thy body; wash with tears thy wounds;  
 And wipe them with her hair.

## CHORUS.

Peace, virgin, peace:  
 Nor thou, sad prince, reply; whate'er he is,  
 Be he a captive, fugitive, or corse,  
 He is what heav'n ordain'd: these holy groves  
 Permit no exclamation 'gainst heav'n's will  
 To violate their echoes: Patience, here,  
 Her meek hands folded on her modest breast,  
 In mute submission lifts th' adoring eye,  
 Ev'n to the storm that wrecks her.

## EVELINA.

Holy Druid,  
 If ought my erring tongue has said pollutes  
 This sacred place, I from my soul abjure it.  
 And will these lips bar with eternal silence,  
 Rather than speak a word, or act a deed  
 Unmeet for thy sage daughters; blessing first  
 This hallow'd hour, that takes me from the world,  
 And joins me to their sober sisterhood.



## C H O R U S.

'Tis wisely said. See, prince, this prudent maid,  
Now, while the ruddy flame of sparkling youth  
Glow on her beauteous cheek, can quit the world  
Without a sigh, whilst thou —

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Would save my queen  
From a base ravisher; would wish to plunge  
This falchion in his breast, and so avenge  
Insulted royalty. O holy men!  
Ye are the sons of piety and peace;  
Ye never felt the sharp vindictive spur,  
That goads the injur'd warrior; the hot tide,  
That flushes crimson on the conscious cheek  
Of him, who burns for glory; else indeed  
Ye much would pity me: would curse the fate  
That coops me here inactive in your groves,  
Robs me of hope, tells me this trusty steel  
Must never cleave one Roman helm again  
Never avenge my queen, nor free my country.

## C H O R U S.

'Tis heav'n's high will —

## C A R A C T A C U S.

I know it, reverend fathers!  
'Tis heav'n's high will, that these poor aged eyes  
Shall never more behold that virtuous woman,  
To whom my youth was constant, 'twas heaven's  
will  
To take her from me at that very hour,  
When best her love might sooth me; that black hour,  
[May memory ever raze it from her records]

# C A R A C T A C U S. 17

When all my squadrons fled, and left their king  
Old and defenceless: him, who nine whole years  
Had stemm'd all Rome with their firm phalanx: yes,  
For nine whole years, my friends, I bravely led  
The valliant veterans, oft to victory,  
Never 'till then to shame. Bear with me, Druid,  
I've done: begin the rites.

## CHORUS.

O would to heav'n  
A frame of mind, more fitted to these rites,  
Possess thee, Prince! that Resignation meek,  
That dove-ey'd Peace, handmaid of Sanctity,  
Approach'd this altar with thee: 'stead of these,  
See I not gaunt Revenge, ensanguin'd Slaughter,  
And mad Ambition, clinging to thy soul,  
Eager to snatch thee back to their domain,  
Back to a vain and miserable world;  
Whose misery, and vanity, tho' try'd,  
Thou still hold'st dearer than these solemn shades,  
Where Quiet reigns with Virtue? Try we yet  
What Holiness can do; for much it can:  
Much is the potency of pious prayer:  
And much the sacred influence convey'd  
By sage mysterious office: when the soul,  
Snatch'd by the power of music from her cell  
Of fleshly thralldom, feels herself upborn  
On plumes of extasy, and boldly springs,  
'Mid swelling harmonies and pealing hymns,  
Up to the porch of heav'n. Strike, then, ye Bards!  
Strike all your strings symphonious; wake a strain

May penetrate, may purge, may purify,  
 His yet unhallow'd bosom; call ye hither  
 The airy tribe, that on yon mountain dwell,  
 Ev'n on majestic Snowdon: they, who never  
 Deign visit mortal men, save on some cause  
 Of highest import, but, sublimely shrin'd  
 On it's hoar top in domes of crystalline ice,  
 Hold converse with those spirits, that possess  
 The skies pure sapphire, nearest heav'n itself.

## O D E.

## I. 1.

MONA on Snowdon calls:  
 Hear, thou King of mountains, hear;  
 Hark, she speaks from all her strings;  
 Hark, her loudest echo rings;  
 King of mountains, bend thine ear:  
 Send thy spirits, send them soon,  
 Now, when Midnight and the Moon  
 Meet upon thy front of snow:  
 See, their gold and ebon rod,  
 Where the sober sisters nod,  
 And greet in whispers sage and slow.  
 Snowdon mark! 'tis Magic's hour;  
 Now the mutter'd spell hath pow'r;  
 Pow'r to rend thy ribs of rock,  
 And burst thy base with thunder's shock;  
 But to thee no ruder spell  
 Shall Mona use, than those that dwell



# C A R A C T A C U S. 19

In music's secret cells, and lie  
Steep'd in the stream of harmony.

1. 2.

Snowdon has heard the strain :  
Hark, amid the wond'ring grove  
Other harpings answer clear,  
Other voices meet our ear,  
Pinnions flutter, shadows move,  
Busy murmurs hum around,  
Rustling vestments brush the ground ;  
Round, and round, and round they go,  
Thro' the twilight, thro' the shade,  
Mount the oak's majestic head,  
And gild the tufted misseltoe.  
Cease, ye glittering race of light,  
Close your wings, and check your flight :  
Here, arrang'd in order due,  
Spread your robes of saffron hue ;  
For lo, with more than mortal fire,  
Mighty Mador smites the lyre :  
Hark he sweeps the master-strings ;  
Listen all——

## C H O R U S.

Break off ; a sullen smog involves the altar ;  
The central oak doth shake ; I hear the sound  
Of steps prophane : Caractacus, retire ;  
Bear off the victims ; Mona is polluted.

## S E M I C H O R U S.

Father, as we did watch the eastern side,  
We spied and instant seiz'd two stranger youths,

Who, in the bottom of a shadowy dell,  
Held earnest converse! Britons do they seem,  
And of Brigantian race.

CHORUS.

Haste, drag them hither.

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS.

CHORUS.

O spare, ye sage and venerable Druids!  
Your countrymen and sons.

CHORUS.

And are ye Britons?  
Unheard of profanation! Rome herself,  
Ev'n impious Rome, whom conquest makes more  
impious,

Would not have dar'd so rashly. O! for words,  
Big with the fiercest force of execration,  
To blast the deed, and doers.

ELIDURUS.

Spare the curse,  
Oh spare our youth!

CHORUS.

Is it not now the hour,  
The holy hour, when to the cloudless height  
Of yon starr'd concave climbs the full-orb'd moon,  
And to this nether world in solemn stillness  
Gives sign, that to the list'ning ear of Heav'n  
Religion's voice should plead; the very babe  
Knows this, and, chance awak'd, his little hands  
Lifts to the gods, and on his innocent couch  
Calls down a blessing. Shall your manly years  
Plead ignorance, and impiously presume  
To press, with vile unconsecrated feet,

On Mona's hallow'd plain? know, wretches, know,  
At any hour such boldness is a crime,  
At this 'tis sacrilege.

VELLINUS.

Were Mona's plain  
More hallow'd still, hallow'd as is Heav'n's self,  
The cause might plead our pardon.

ELIDURUS.

Mighty Druid!  
True, we have rashly dar'd, yet, forc'd by duty,  
Our sov'reign's mandate——

VELLINUS.

Elder by my birth,  
Brother, I claim, in right of eldership,  
To open our high embassy.

CHORUS.

Speak then;  
But see thy words answer in honest weight  
To this proud prelude. Youth! they must be  
weighty,  
T' atone for such a crime.

VELLINUS.

If then to give  
New nerves to vanquish'd valour, if to do,  
What, with the blessing of the Gods, may save  
A bleeding country from oppression's sword,  
Be weighty business, know, on our commission,  
And on it's hop'd success, that weight depends.

CHORUS.

Declare it then at once, briefly and boldly!



VELLINUS.

Caractacus is here.

CHORUS.

Say'st thou, proud boy?  
'Tis boldly said, and, grant 'twere truly said,  
Think'st thou he were not here from fraud or force  
As safe as 'midst a camp of conquerors?  
Here, youth, he would be guarded by the gods;  
Their own high hostage; and each sacred hair  
Of his selected head, would in these caverns  
Sleep with the unsunn'd silver of the mine,  
As precious and as safe; record the time,  
When Mona e'er betray'd the hapless wretch,  
That made her groves his refuge.

VELLINUS.

Holy Druid!

Think not so harshly of our enterprize.  
Can force, alas! dwell in our unarm'd hands?  
Can fraud in our young bosoms? No, dread fear,  
Our business told, I trust thou'lt soon disclaim  
The vain suspicion; and thy holy ear  
(Be brave Caractacus or here or absent)  
Shall instant learn it: From the north we come;  
The sons of her, whose heav'n-entrusted sway  
Blesses the bold Brigantes; men who firmly  
Have three long moons withstood those Roman  
powers,  
Which, led by fell Ostorius, still assail  
Our frontiers: yet so oft' have our stout swords  
Repell'd their hot assault, that now, like falcons,  
They hang suspended, loth to quit their prey,

Nor daring yet to seize it. Such the state  
Of us and Rome ; 'mid which our prudent mother,  
Revolving what might to her people's weal  
Best sink the dubious scale, gave us swift charge  
To seek the great Caractacus, and call  
His valour to her aid, to lead her bands,  
To fight the cause of liberty and Britain,  
And quell these ravagers.

*Caractacus starts from behind the altar.*

C A R A C T A C U S, V E L L I N U S,  
E L I D U R U S, C H O R U S.

And ye have found me ;  
Friends, ye have found me : lead me to your Queen,  
And the last purple drop in these old veins  
Shall fall for her and Britain.

C H O R U S.

Rash, rash Prince!

V E L L I N U S.

Ye blest immortal pow'rs ! is this the man,  
The more than man, who for nine bloody years  
Withstood all Rome ? He is ; that war-like front,  
Seam'd o'er with honest scars, proclaims he is :  
Kneel, brother, kneel, while in his royal hand  
We lodge the signet : this, in pledge of faith,  
Great Cartismandua sends, and with it tells thee  
She has a nobler pledge than this behind ;  
Thy Queen —

C A R A C T A C U S.

Guideria !

VELLINUS.

Safely with our mother.

C A R A C T A C U S.

How, when, where rescued? mighty Gods, I  
thank ye.

For it is true, this signet speaks it true.

O tell me briefly.

VELLINUS.

In a sally, Prince,

Which, wanting abler chiefs, my gracious mother  
Committed to my charge, our troops assail'd  
One outwork of the camp; the mask of night  
Favour'd our arms, and there my happy hand  
Was doom'd 'mid other prisoners to release  
The captive matron.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Let me clasp thee, youth,

And thou shalt be my son; I had one, stranger,  
Just of thy years; he look'd like thee right honest;  
Had just that freeborn boldness on his brow,  
And yet he fail'd me. Were it not for him,  
Who, as thou seest, ev'n at this hour of joy,  
Draws tears down mine old cheek, I were as blest  
As the great gods. Oh, he has all disgrac'd  
His high-born ancestry! But I'll forget him.  
Haste, Evelina, barb my knotty spear,  
Bind fast this trusty falchion to my thigh,  
My bow, my target —

C H O R U S.

Rash Caractacus!

What hast thou done? What dost thou mean to do?



C A R A C T A C U S. 25

C A R A C T A C U S.

To save my country.

C H O R U S.

To betray thyself.

That thou hast done; the rest thou canst not do,  
If Heav'n forbids; and of it's awful will  
Thy fury reck's not: Has the bleeding victim  
Pour'd a propitious stream? the milk-white steeds  
Unrein'd and neighing pranc'd with fav'ring steps?  
Say, when these youths approach'd, did not a gust  
Of livid smok involve the bickering flame?  
Did not the forest tremble? every omen  
Led thee to doubt their honesty of purpose;  
And yet, before their tongues could tell that purpose,  
Ere I had tender'd, as our laws ordain,  
Their test of faith, thy rudeness rush'd before me,  
Infringing my just rights.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Druid, methinks,  
At such a time, in such a cause, Reproof  
Might bait it's sternness. Now, by Heav'n, I feel,  
Beyond all omens, that within my breast,  
Which marshals me to conquest; something here  
That snatches me beyond all mortal fears,  
Lifts me to where upon her jasper throne  
Sits flame-rob'd Victory, who calls me son,  
And crowns me with a palm, whose deathless green  
Shall bloom when Cæsar's fades.

C H O R U S.

Vain confidence!

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Yet I submit in all —

## C H O R U S.

'Tis meet thou should'st.

Thou art a King, a sov'reign o'er frail man;

I am a Druid, servant of the Gods;

Such service is above such sov'reignty,

As well thou know'st: if they should prompt these  
lips

To interdict the thing thou dar'st to do,

What would avail thy daring?

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Holy man!

But thou wilt bless it; Heav'n will bid thee bless it;

Thou know'st that, when we fight to save our  
country,

We fight the cause of Heav'n. The man that falls,

Falls hallow'd; falls a victim for the Gods;

For them and for their altars.

## C H O R U S.

Valiant Prince?

Think not we lightly rate our country's weal,

Or thee our country's champion. Well we know

The glorious meed of those exalted souls,

Who flame like thee for freedom: mark me, Prince.

The time will come, when Destiny and Death,

Thron'd in a burning car, the thund'ring wheels

Arm'd with gigantic scythes of adamant,

Shall scour this field of life: and in the rear

The fiend Oblivion: kingdoms, empires, worlds

Melt in the general blaze: when, lo, from high

Andraсте darting, catches from the wreck

# C A R A C T A C U S.

27

The roll of fame, claps her ascending plumes,  
And stamps on orient stars each patriot name,  
Round her eternal dome.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Speak ever thus,  
And I will hear thee, 'till attention faint  
In heedless extasy.

## C H O R U S.

This tho' we know,  
Let man beware with headlong zeal to rush  
Where slaughter calls; it is not courage, Prince,  
No nor the pride and practis'd skill in arms,  
That gains this meed: the warrior is no patriot,  
Save when, obsequious to the will of Heav'n,  
He draws the sword of vengeance.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Surely, Druid,  
Such fair occasion speaks the will of Heav'n——

## C H O R U S.

Monarch, perchance thou hast a fair occasion:  
But, if thou hast, the Gods will soon declare it:  
Their sov'reign will thou know'st not; this to learn  
Demands our search. Ye mortals all retire!  
Leave ye the grove to us and Inspiration;  
Nor let a step, or ev'n one glance prophane,  
Steal from your caverns: stay, my holy brethren,  
Ye time-ennobled Seers, whose rev'rend brows  
Full eighty winters whiten; you, ye Bards,  
Leoline, Cadwall, Hoel, Cantaber,  
Attend upon our slumbers: Wond'rous men,



Ye, whose skill'd fingers know how best to lead,  
 Thro' all the maze of sound the wayward step  
 Of Harmony, recalling oft, and oft  
 Permitting her unbridled course to rush  
 Thro' dissonance to concord, sweetest then  
 Ev'n when expected harshest. Mador, thou  
 Alone shalt lift thy voice; no choral peal  
 Shall drown thy solemn warblings; thou best  
 know'st

That opiate charm which lulls corporeal sense:  
 Thou hast the key, great Bard! that best can ope  
 The portal of the soul; unlock it strait,  
 And lead the pensive pilgrim on her way,  
 Thro' the vast regions of futurity.

*Exeunt Caractacus, Vellinus,  
 &c. &c.*

## O D E.

## I. 1.

H A I L, thou harp of Phrygian frame!  
 In years of yore that Camber bore  
 From Troy's sepulchral flame;  
 With ancient Brute, to Britain's shore  
 The mighty minstrel came:  
 Sublime upon the burnish'd prow,  
 He bad thy manly modes to flow;  
 Britain heard the descant bold,  
 She flung her white arms o'er the sea;  
 Proud in her leafy bosom to enfold  
 The freight of harmony.

## I. 2.

Mute 'till then was ev'ry plain,  
 Save where the flood 'mid mountains rude  
 Tumbled his tide amain ;  
 And echo from th' impending wood  
 Refounded the hoarse strain ;  
 While from the north the fullen gale  
 With hollow whistlings shook the vale ;  
 Dismal notes, and answer'd soon  
 By savage howl the heaths among,  
 What time the wolf doth bay the trembling moon,  
 And thin the bleating throng.

## I. 3.

Thou spak'st, imperial Lyre,  
 The rough roar ceas'd, and airs from high  
 Lapt the land in extasy :  
 Fancy, the fairy, with thee came ;  
 And Inspiration, bright-ey'd dame,  
 Oft at thy call would leave her sapphire sky ;  
 And, if not vain the verse presumes,  
 Ev'n now some chaste Divinity is near :  
 For lo ! the sound of distant plumes  
 Pants thro' the pathless desert of the air.  
 'Tis not the flight of her ;  
 'Tis sleep, her dewy harbinger,  
 Change, my harp, O change thy measures ;  
 Cull, from thy mellifluous treasures,  
 Notes that steal on even feet,  
 Ever flow, yet never pausing,  
 Mixt with many a warble sweet,  
 In a ling'ring cadence closing,

While the pleas'd power sinks gently down the skies,  
And seals with hand of down the Druids slumb'ring  
eyes.

## II. 1.

Thrice I pause, and thrice I sound  
The central string, and now I ring  
(By measur'd lore profound)  
A sevenfold chime, and sweep, and swing  
Above, below, around,  
To mix thy music with the spheres,  
That warble to immortal ears.  
Inspiration hears the call;  
She rises from her throne above,  
And, sudden as the glancing meteors fall,  
She comes, she fills the grove.

## II. 2.

High her port; her waving hand  
A pencil bears; the days, the years,  
Arise at her command,  
And each obedient colouring wears.  
Lo, where Time's pictur'd band  
In hues æthereal glide along;  
O mark the transitory throng;  
Now they dazzle, now they die,  
Instant they flit from light to shade,  
Mark the blue forms of faint futurity,  
O mark them ere they fade.

## II. 3.

Whence was that inward groan?  
Why bursts thro' closed lids the tear?  
Why uplifts the bristling hair



# C A R A C T A C U S.

31

It's white and venerable shade?  
 Why down the consecrated head  
 Courses in chilly drops the dew of fear?  
 All is not well, the pale-ey'd moon  
 Curtains her head in clouds, the stars retire,  
 Save from the sultry south alone  
 The swart star flings his pestilential fire;  
 Ev'n Sleep herself will fly,  
 If not recall'd by harmony.  
 Wake, my lyre! thy softest numbers,  
 Such as nurse ecstatic slumbers,  
 Sweet as tranquil virtue feels  
 When the toil of life is ending,  
 While from earth the spirit steals,  
 And, on new-born plumes ascending,  
 Hastens to lave in the bright fount of day,  
 'Till Destiny prepare a shrine of purer clay.  
*The Druid waking, speaks.*

# C H O R U S.

It may not be. Avaunt terrific ax!  
 Why hangs thy bright edge glaring o'er the grove?  
 O for a giant's nerve to ward the stroke!  
 It bows, it falls  
 Where am I? hush, my soul!  
 'Twas all a dream. Resume no more the strain:  
 The hour is past: my brethren! what ye saw,  
 (If what ye saw, as by your looks I read,  
 Bore like ill-omen'd shape) hold it in silence.  
 The midnight air falls chilly on my breast;

And now I shiver, now a feverish glow  
Scorches my vitals. Hark, some step approaches.

## EVELINA, CHORUS.

Thus, with my wayward fears, to burst unbidden  
On your dread synod, rousing, as ye seem,  
From holy trance, appears a desperate deed,  
Ev'n to the wretch who dares it.

## CHORUS.

Virgin! quickly  
Pronounce the cause.

## EVELINA.

Bear with a simple maid  
Too prone to fear, perchance my fears are vain.

## CHORUS.

But yet declare them.

## EVELINA.

I suspect me much  
The faith of these Brigantes.

## CHORUS.

Say'st thou, Virgin?  
Heed what thou say'st; Suspicion is a guest  
That in the breast of man, of ireful man,  
Too oft' his welcome finds; yet seldom sure  
In that submissive calm that smooths the mind  
Of maiden innocence.

## EVELINA.

I know it well:  
Yet must I still distrust the elder stranger:  
For while he talks, (and much the flatterer talks)

His brother's silent carriage gives disproof  
 Of all his boast; indeed I mark'd it well;  
 And, as my father with the elder held  
 Bold speech and warlike, as is still his wont  
 When fir'd with hope of conquest, oft I saw  
 A sigh unbidden heave the younger's breast,  
 Half check'd as it was rais'd; sometimes, methought,  
 His gentle eye would cast a glance on me,  
 As if he pitied me; and then again  
 Would fasten on my father, gazing there  
 To veneration; then he'd sigh again,  
 Look on the ground, and hang his modest head  
 Most pensively.

## C H O R U S.

This may demand, my breth'ren,  
 More serious search: Virgin! proceed.

## E V E L I N A.

'Tis true,  
 My father, rapt in high heroic zeal,  
 His ev'ry thought big with his country's freedom,  
 Heeds not the different carriage of these brethren,  
 The elder takes him wholly; yet, methinks,  
 The younger's manners have I know not what,  
 That speaks him far more artless. This besides,  
 Is it not strange, if, as the tale reports,  
 My mother sojourns with this distant queen,  
 She should not send or to my fire, or me,  
 Some fond remembrance of her love? ah! none,  
 With tears I speak it, none, not her dear blessing  
 Has reach'd my longing ears.



## CHORUS.

The gods, my brethren,  
 Have wak'd these doubts in the untainted breast  
 Of this mild maiden; oft to female softness,  
 Oft to the purity of virgin souls  
 Doth heav'n it's voluntary light dispense,  
 When victims bleed in vain. They must be spies.  
 Hie thee, good Cantaber, and to our presence  
 Summon the young Brigantian.

## EVELINA.

Do not that,  
 Or, if ye do, yet treat him nothing sternly:  
 The softest terms from such a tender breast  
 Will draw confession, and, if ye shall find  
 The treason ye suspect, forbear to curse him.  
 (Not that my weakness means to guide your wisdom)  
 Yet, as I think he would not wittingly  
 E'er do a deed of baseness, were it granted  
 That I might question him, my heart forebodes  
 It more could gain by gentleness and prayers,  
 Than will the fiercest threats.

## CHORUS.

Perchance it may:  
 And quickly shalt thou try. But see the King!  
 And with him both the youths.

## EVELINA.

Alas! my fears  
 Forewent my errand, else had I inform'd thee  
 That therefore did I come, and from my father  
 To gain admission. Mark the younger, Druid,

How sad he seems; oft did he in the cave  
So fold his arms ——

## C H O R U S.

We mark him much, and much  
The elder's free and dreadless confidence.  
Virgin, retire a while in yonder vale,  
Nor, 'till thy royal father quits the grove,  
Resume thy station here. *Exit Evelina.*

C A R A C T A C U S, C H O R U S,  
V E L L I N U S, E L I D U R U S.

Forgive me, Druid!  
My eager soul no longer could sustain  
The pangs of expectation; hence I sent  
The virgin innocence of Evelina,  
Safest to break upon your privacy:  
She not return'd, O pardon! that uncall'd  
I follow: the great cause, I trust, absolves me:  
'Tis your's, 'tis freedom's, 'tis the cause of heav'n;  
And sure heav'n owns it such.

## C H O R U S.

Caractacus,  
All that by sage and sanctimonious rites  
Might of the gods be ask'd, we have essay'd,  
And yet, nor to our wish, nor to their wont,  
Gave they benign assent.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Death to our hopes!

## C H O R U S.

While yet we lay in sacred slumber tranc'd,

Sullen and sad to fancy's frightened eye  
 Did shapes of dun and murky hue advance,  
 In train tumultuous, all of gesture strange,  
 And passing horrible; starting we wak'd,  
 Yet felt no waking calm; still all was dark,  
 Still rang our tinkling ears with screams of woe.  
 Suspicious tremors still ——

## V E L L I N U S.

Of what suspicious?

Druid, our Queen ——

## C H O R U S.

Restrain thy way-ward tongue,  
 Insolent youth! in such licentious mood  
 To interrupt our speech ill suits thy years,  
 And worse our sanctity.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

'Tis his distress  
 Makes him forget, what else his reverent zeal  
 Would pay ye holily. Think what he feels,  
 Poor youth! who fears yon moon, before she wanes,  
 May see his country conquer'd; see his mother  
 The victor's slave, her royal blood debas'd,  
 Dragging her chains thro' the throng'd streets of  
 Rome,  
 To grace oppression's triumph. Horrid thought!  
 Say, can it be that he, whose strenuous youth  
 Adds vigor to his virtue, e'er can bear  
 This patiently? he comes to ask my aid,  
 And, that withheld, (as now he needs must fear)  
 What means, alas! are left? search Britain round,  
 What chief dares cope with Rome? what king but  
 holds



C A R A C T A C U S. 37

His loan of power at a Proconsul's will,  
At best a scepter'd slave?

V E L L I N U S.

Yes, Monarch, yes,  
If Heav'n restrains thy formidable sword,  
Or to it's stroke denies that just success  
Which Heav'n alone can give, I fear me much  
Our Queen, ourselves, nay Britain's self, must  
perish.

C A R A C T A C U S.

But is not this a fear makes Virtue vain?  
Tears from yon ministring regents of the sky  
Their right? Plucks from firm-handed Providence,  
The golden reins of sublunary sway,  
And gives them to blind Chance? If this be so,  
If Tyranny must lord it o'er the earth,  
There's Anarchy in Heav'n. Nay, frown not,  
Druid,  
I do not think 'tis thus.

C H O R U S.

We trust thou dost not.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Masters of Wisdom! No: my soul confides  
In that all-healing and all-forming Power,  
Who, on the radiant day when Time was born,  
Cast his broad eye upon the wild of ocean,  
And calm'd it with a glance: then, plunging deep  
His mighty arm, pluck'd from it's dark domain  
This throne of Freedom, lifted it to light,  
Girt it with silver cliffs, and call'd it Britain:  
He did, and will preserve it.

## C H O R U S.

Pious Prince,  
In that all-healing and all-forming power  
Still let thy soul confide ; but not in men,  
No, not in these, ingenuous as they seem,  
'Till they are try'd by that high test of faith  
Our ancient laws ordain.

## V E L L I N U S.

Illustrious Seer,  
Methinks our Sov'reign's signet well might plead  
Her envoy's faith. Thy pardon, mighty Druid,  
Not for ourselves, but for our Queen we plead ;  
Mistrusting us, ye wound her honour.

## C H O R U S.

Peace ;  
Our will admits no parly. Thither, Youths,  
Turn your astonish'd eyes ; behold yon huge  
And unhewn sphere of living adamant,  
Which, pois'd by magic, rests it's central weight  
On yonder pointed rock : firm as it seems,  
Such is it's strange and virtuous property,  
It moves obsequious to the gentlest touch  
Of him, whose breast is pure ; but to a traitor,  
Tho' ev'n a giant's prowess nerv'd his arm,  
It stands as fixt as Snowdon. No reply ;  
The Gods command that one of you must now  
Approach and try it : in your snowy vests,  
Ye Priests, involve the lots, and to the younger,  
As is our wont, tender the choice of Fate.

E L I D U R U S.

Heav'ns ! is it fall'n on me ?

C H O R U S.

Young Prince, it, is ;  
Prepare thee for thy tryal.

E L I D U R U S.

Gracious Gods !  
Who may look up to your tremendous thrones,  
And say his breast is pure ? All-searching Powers,  
Ye know already how and what I am ;  
And what ye mean to publish me in Mona,  
To that I yield and tremble.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Rouse thee, Youth !  
And, with that courage honest Truth supplies,  
(For sure ye both are true) haste to the tryal ;  
Behold I lead thee on.

C H O R U S.

Prince, we arrest  
Thy hasty step ; to witness this high test  
Pertains to us alone. Awhile retire,  
And in yon cave his brother be thy charge ;  
The tryal past, again will we confer,  
Touching that part which Heav'ns deciding choice  
Wills thee to act.

*Exeunt Caractacus and Vellinus.*



## CHORUS, ELIDURUS.

Now be the rites prepar'd :  
 And now, ye Bards, chaunt ye that custom'd hymn,  
 The prelude of this fam'd solemnity.

O D E.

I. 1.

THOU Spirit pure, that spread'st unseen  
 Thy pinions o'er this pond'rous sphere,  
 And, breathing thro' each rigid vein,  
 Fill'st with stupendous life the marble mass,  
 And bid'st it bow upon it's base,  
 When sov'reign Truth is near;  
 Spirit invisible! to thee  
 We swell the solemn harmony;  
 Hear us, and aid :  
 Thou, that in Virtue's cause  
 O'er-rulest Nature's laws,  
 O hear, and aid with influence high  
 The sons of Peace and Piety.

I. 2.

First-born of that æthereal tribe  
 Call'd into birth ere time or place,  
 Whom wave nor wind can circumscribe,  
 Heirs of the liquid liberty of Light,  
 That float on rainbow pennons bright  
 Thro' all the wilds of space,  
 Yet thou alone of all thy kind  
 Canst range the regions of the mind,

# C A R A C T A C U S. 41

Thou only know'st  
That dark meandering maze,  
Where wayward Falshood strays,  
And, seizing swift the lurking sprite,  
Forces her forth to shame and light.

1. 3.

Thou canst enter the dark cell  
Where the vulture Conscience slumbers,  
And, unarm'd by charming spell,  
Or magic numbers,  
Canst rouse her from her formidable sleep,  
And bid her dart her raging talons deep;  
Yet, ah! too seldom doth the furious fiend  
Thy bidding wait; vindictive, self-prepar'd,  
She knows her tort'ring time; too sure to rend  
The trembling heart, when Virtue quits her guard.  
Pause then, celestial guest!  
And, brooding on thine adamantine sphere,  
If fraud approach, Spirit, that fraud declare;  
To Conscience and to Mona leave the rest.

## C H O R U S.

Heard'st thou the awful invocation, Youth,  
Wrapt in those holy harpings?

## E L I D U R U S.

Sage, I did;  
And it came o'er my soul as doth the thunder,  
While distant yet, it, with expected burst,  
Threatens the trembling ear. Now to the trial.

G

C H O R U S.

Ere that, bethink thee well what rig'rous doom  
Threatens thine act, if failing, certain death:  
So certain, that in our absolving tongues  
Rests not that power may save thee: Thou must die.

E V E L I N A, E L I D U R U S,

C H O R U S.

Die, say'st thou? Druid!

E L I D U R U S.

Evelina here!

Lead to the rock.

C H O R U S.

No, youth, a while we spare thee;  
And, in our stead, permit this royal maiden  
To urge thee first with virgin gentleness;  
Respect our clemency, and meet her questions  
With answers prompt and true; so may'st thou 'scape  
A sterner tryal.

E L I D U R U S.

Rather to the rock —

E V E L I N A.

Dost thou disdain me, Prince? Lost as I am,  
Methinks the daughter of Caractacus  
Might merit milder treatment: I was born  
To royal hopes and promise, nurs'd i' th' lap  
Of soft prosperity, alas the change!  
I meant but to address a few brief words  
To this young Prince, and he doth turn his eye,  
And scorns to answer me.



ELIDURUS.

Scorn thee, sweet Maid?

No, 'tis the fear——

EVELINA.

And canst thou fear me, Youth?  
Ev'n while I led a life of royalty,  
I bore myself to all with meek deportment,  
In nothing harsh, or cruel: and, howe'er  
Misfortune works upon the minds of men,  
(For some they say it turns to very stone)  
Mine I am sure it softens. Wert thou guilty,  
Yet I should pity thee; nay, wert thou leagu'd  
To load this suffering heart with more misfortunes,  
Still should I pity thee; nor e'er believe  
Thou would'st, on free and voluntary choice,  
Betray the innocent.

ELIDURUS.

Indeed I would not.

EVELINA.

No, gracious Youth, I do believe thou would'st not:  
For on thy brow the liberal hand of Heav'n  
Has portray'd Truth as visible and bold,  
As were the pictur'd suns that deckt the brows  
Of our brave ancestors. Say then, young Prince,  
(For therefore have I wish'd to question thee)  
Bring ye no token of a mother's fondness  
To her expecting child? Gentle thou seemest,  
And sure that gentleness would prompt thine heart  
To visit, and to sooth with courteous office,  
Distress like her's. A captive and a queen—

Has more than common claim for pity, Prince,  
 And, ev'n the ills of venerable age  
 Were cause enough to move thy tender nature.  
 The tears o'er-charge thine eye. Alas, my fears!  
 Sicknefs or sore infirmity had seiz'd her,  
 Before thou left'st the palace, else her lips  
 Had to thy care intrusted some kind message,  
 And blest her hapless daughter by thy tongue.  
 Would she were here!

ELIDURUS.

Would Heav'n she were!

EVELINA.

Ah why?

ELIDURUS.

Because you wish it.

EVELINA.

Thanks, ingenuous youth,  
 For this thy courtesy. Yet, if the queen  
 Thy mother shines with such rare qualities,  
 As late thy brother boasted, she will calm  
 Her woes, and I shall clasp her aged knees  
 Again, in peace and liberty. — Alas!  
 He speaks not; all my fears are just.

ELIDURUS.

What fears?

The Queen Guideria is not dead.

EVELINA.

Not dead!

But is she in that sacred state of freedom,  
 Which we were taught to hope? Why sigh'st thou,  
 Youth?

Thy years have yet been prosp'rous. Did thy father  
 E'er lose his kingdom? Did captivity  
 E'er seize thy shrieking mother? thou can'st go  
 To yonder cave, and find thy brother safe:  
 He is not lost, as mine is. Youth, thou sigh'st  
 Again; thou hast not sure such cause for sorrow;  
 But if thou hast, give me thy griefs, I pray thee;  
 I have a heart can softly sympathize,  
 And sympathy is soothing.

ELIDURUS.

O gods! gods!  
 She tears my soul. What shall I say?

EVELINA.

Perchance,  
 For all in this bad world must have their woes,  
 Thou too hast thine; and may'st, like me, be  
 wretched.

Haply amid the ruinous waste of war,  
 'Mid that wild havock, which these sons of blood  
 Bring on our groaning country, some chaste maid,  
 Whose tender soul was link'd by love to thine,  
 Might fall the trembling prey to Roman rage,  
 Ev'n at the golden hour, when holy rites  
 Had seal'd your virtuous vows. If it were so,  
 Indeed I pity her!

ELIDURUS.

Not that: not that.  
 Never 'till now did beauty's matchless beam—  
 But I am dumb.

EVELINA.  
 Why that dejected eye?



And why this silence? that some weighty grief  
 O'erhangs thy soul, thy ev'ry look proclaims.  
 Why then refuse it words? The heart, that bleeds  
 From any stroke of fate or human wrongs,  
 Loves to disclose itself, that list'ning pity  
 May drop a healing tear upon the wound.  
 'Tis only, when with inbred horror smote  
 At some base act, or done, or to be done,  
 That the recoiling soul, with conscious dread,  
 Shrinks back into itself. But thou, good youth—

ELIDURUS.

Cease, royal maid! permit me to depart.—

EVELINA.

Yet hear me, stranger! Truth and Secrecy,  
 Tho' friends, are seldom necessary friends—

ELIDURUS.

I go to try my truth—

EVELINA.

O! go not hence,  
 In wrath; think not, that I suspect thy virtue:  
 Yet ignorance may oft make virtue slide,  
 And if —

ELIDURUS.

In pity spare me.

EVELINA.

If thy brother —

Nay, start not, do not turn thine eye from mine;  
 Speak, I conjure thee, is his purpose honest?  
 I know the guilty price, that barbarous Rome  
 Sets on my father's head; and gold, vile gold,

Has now a charm for Britons: Brib'd by this,  
Should he betray him—Yes, I see thou shudder'st  
At the dire thought; yet not, as if 'twere strange;  
But as our fears were mutual. Ah, young stranger;  
That open face scarce needs a tongue to utter  
What works within. Come then, ingenuous Prince,  
And instant make discovery to the Druid,  
While yet 'tis not too late.

ELIDURUS.

Ah! what discover?

Say, whom must I betray?

EVELINA.

Thy brother.

ELIDURUS.

Ha!

EVELINA.

Who is no brother, if his guilty soul  
Teems with such perfidy. O all ye stars!  
Can he be brother to a youth like thee,  
Who would betray an old and honour'd King,  
That King his countryman, and one whose prowess  
Once guarded Britain 'gainst th' assailing world?  
Can he be brother to a youth like thee,  
Who from a young, defenceless, innocent maid,  
Would take that King her father? Make her suffer  
All that an orphan suffers? More perchance:  
The ruffian foe.—O tears, ye choak my utterance!  
Can he be brother to a youth like thee,  
Who would defile his soul by such black deeds?  
It cannot be——And yet, thou still art silent.

Turn, youth, and see me weep. Ah, see me kneel:  
 I am of royal blood, not wont to kneel,  
 Yet will I kneel to thee. O save my father!  
 Save a distressful maiden from the force  
 Of barbarous men! Be thou a brother to me,  
 For mine alas! hah! [*Sees Arviragus entering.*]

ARVIRAGUS, EVELINA,  
 ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

Evelina rise!

Know, maid, I ne'er will tamely see thee kneel,  
 Ev'n at the foot of Cæsar.

EVELINA.

'Tis himself:

And he will prove my father's fears were false,  
 False, as his son is brave. Thou best of brothers.  
 Come to my arms. Where hast thou been, thou  
 wanderer?

How wer't thou sav'd? indeed, Arviragus,  
 I never shed such tears, since thou wer't lost,  
 For these are tears of rapture.

ARVIRAGUS.

Evelina!

Fain would I greet thee, as a brother ought:  
 But wherefore did'st thou kneel?

EVELINA.

O! ask not now.

ARVIRAGUS.

By heav'n I must, and he must answer me,  
 Who'er he be. What art thou, sullen stranger?

ELIDURUS.

A Briton.



A R V I R A G U S.

Brief and bold.

E V E L I N A.

Ah, spare the taunt:

He merits not thy wrath. Behold the Druids;

Lo, they advance: with holy reverence first

Thou must address their sanctity.

A R V I R A G U S.

I will.

But see, proud boy, thou dost not quit the grove;

'Till time allows us parley.

E L I D U R U S.

Prince, I mean not.

A R V I R A G U S.

Sages, and sons of heav'n! Illustrious Druids!

Abruptly I approach your sacred presence:

Yet such dire tidings——

C H O R U S.

On thy peril, peace!

Thou standst accus'd, and by a father's voice,

Of crimes abhorr'd, of cowardice and flight;

And therefore mayst not in the sacred groves

Utter polluted accents. Quickly say,

Wherefore thou fledst? For that base fact unclear'd

We hold no further converse.

A R V I R A G U S.

O ye gods!

Am I the son of your Caractacus?

And could I fly?

H

## CHORUS.

Waste not or time or words :

But tell us, why thou fledst ?

## ARVIRAGUS.

I fled not, Druid !

By the great gods I fled not ! Save to stop  
Our dastard troops, that basely turn'd their backs.

I stopt, I rallied them, when lo a shaft

Of random cast did level me with earth,

Where pale and senseless, as the slain around me,

I lay 'till midnight : Then, as from long trance

Awoke, I crawl'd upon my feeble limbs

To a lone cottage, where a pitying hind

Lodg'd me and nourish'd me. My strength repair'd,

It boots not that I tell, what humble arts

Compell'd I us'd to screen me from the foe.

How now a peasant from a beggarly scrip

I sold cheap food to slaves, that nam'd the price,

Nor after gave it. Now a minstrel poor

With ill-tun'd harp and uncouth descant shrill

I ply'd a thriftless trade, and by such shifts

Did win obscurity to shroud my name.

At length to other conquests in the north

Ostorius led his legions : Safer now,

Yet not secure, I to some valiant chiefs,

Whom war had spar'd, discover'd, what I was ;

And with them plan'd, how surest we might draw

Our scatter'd forces to some rocky fastness

In rough Caernarvon, there to breathe in freedom,

If not with brave incursion to oppress

The thinly-station'd foe. And soon our art

# C A R A C T A C U S.

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So well avail'd, that now at Snowdon's foot  
Full twenty troops of hardy veterans wait  
To call my fire their leader.

## C H O R U S.

Valiant youth —

## E V E L I N A.

He is—I said he was a valiant youth,  
Nor has he sham'd his race.

## C H O R U S.

We do believe  
Thy modest tale: And may the righteous gods  
Thus ever shed upon thy noble breast  
Discretion's cooling dew. When nurtur'd so,  
Then, only then, doth valour bloom mature.

## A R V I R A G U S.

Yet vain is valour howsoe'er it bloom:  
Druid, the gods frown on us. All my hopes  
Are blasted; I shall ne'er rejoin my friends,  
Ne'er bless them with my father. Holy men,  
I have a tale to tell, will shake your souls.  
Your Mona is invaded; Rome approaches,  
E'en to these groves approaches.

## S E M I C H O R U S.

Horror! horror!

## A R V I R A G U S.

Late, as I landed on yon highest beach,  
Where nodding from the rocks the poplars fling  
Their scatter'd arms, and dash them in the wave,  
There were their vessels moor'd, as if they sought  
Concealment 'mid the shade, and as I pass'd



Up yon thick-planted ridge, I 'spy'd their helms  
 'Mid brakes and boughs trench'd in the heath below,  
 Where like a nest of night-worms did they glitter,  
 Sprinkling the plain with brightness. On I sped  
 With silent step, yet oft did pass so near,  
 'Twas next to prodigy, I 'scap'd unseen.

## C H O R U S.

Their number, princee?

## A R V I R A G U S.

Few, if mine hasty eye  
 Did find, and count them all.

## C H O R U S.

O brethren, brethren,  
 Treason and sacrilege, worse foes than Rome,  
 Have led Rome hither. Instant seize that wretch,  
 And bring him to our presence.

## C H O R U S, E L I D U R U S, A R V I R A G U S.

Say, thou false one!  
 What doom befits the slave, who sells his country?

## E L I D U R U S.

Death, sudden death!

## C H O R U S.

No, ling'ring piece-meal death;  
 And to such death thy brother and thyself.  
 We now devote. Villain, thy deeds are known;  
 'Tis known, ye led the impious Romans hither  
 To slaughter us ev'n on our holy altars.

## E L I D U R U S.

That on my soul doth lie some secret grief,  
 These looks perforce will tell: It is not fear,  
 Druids, it is not fear, that shakes me thus;

C A R A C T A C U S. 53

The great gods know, it is not : Ye can never :  
For, what tho' wisdom lifts ye next those gods,  
Ye cannot, like to them, unlock mens breasts,  
And read their inmost thoughts. Ah! that ye could,

ARVIRAGUS.

What hast thou done?

ELIDURUS.

What, prince, I will not tell.

CHORUS.

Wretch, there are means —

ELIDURUS.

I know, and terrible means ;  
And 'tis both fit, that you should try those means,  
And I endure them : Yet I think, my patience  
Will for some space baffle your torturing fury.

CHORUS.

Be that best known, when our inflicted goads  
Harrow thy flesh!

ARVIRAGUS.

Stranger 'ere this is try'd  
Confess the whole of thy black perfidy ;  
So black, that when I look upon thy youth,  
Read thy mild eye, and mark thy modest brow,  
I think indeed, thou durst not.

ELIDURUS.

Such a crime  
Indeed I durst not; and would rather be  
The very wretch, thou seest. I'll speak no more.

CHORUS.

Brethren, 'tis so. The virgin's thoughts were just:  
This youth has been deceived,

## E L I D U R U S.

Yes, one word more.

You say, the Romans have invaded Mona.

Give me a sword and twenty honest Britons;

And I will quell those Romans. Vain demand!

Alas! you cannot: Ye are men of peace:

Religion's self forbids. Lead then to torture.

## A R V I R A G U S.

Now on my soul this youth doth move me much.

## C H O R U S.

Think not, religion and our holy office

Doth teach us tamely, like the bleating lamb,

To crouch before oppression, and with neck

Outstretch'd await the stroke. Mistaken boy!

Did not strict justice claim thee for her victim,

We might full safely send thee to these Romans,

Inviting their hot charge. Know, when I blow

That sacred trumpet bound with sable fillets

To yonder branching oak, the awful sound

Calls forth a thousand Britons train'd alike

In holy and in martial exercise,

Not by such mode and rule, as Romans use,

But of that fierce portentous horrible sort,

As shall appall ev'n Romans.

## E L I D U R U S.

Gracious gods!

Then there are hopes indeed. O call them instant,

This prince will lead them on: I'll follow him,

Tho' in my chains, and some way dash them round

To harm the haughty foe.



## ARVIRAGUS.

A thousand Britons,  
And arm'd! O instant blow the sacred trump,  
And let me head them. Yet methinks this youth—

## CHORUS.

I know, what thou wouldst say, might join thee,  
prince.

True, were he free from crime, or had confess.

## ELIDURUS.

Confest. Ah, think not, I will ev'r —

## ARVIRAGUS.

Reflect.

Either thyself or brother must have wrong'd us :  
Then why conceal —

## ELIDURUS.

Hast thou a brother? no!  
Else hadst thou spar'd the word; and yet a sister  
Lovely as thine might more than teach thee, prince,  
What 'tis to have a brother. Hear me, Druids,  
Tho' I would prize an hour of freedom now,  
Before an age of any after date:  
Tho' I would seize it, as the gift of heav'n,  
And use it as heaven's gift: yet do not think,  
I so will purchase it. Give it me freely,  
I yet will spurn the boon, and hug my chains,  
'Till you do swear by your own hoary heads,  
My brother shall be safe.

## CHORUS.

Excellent youth!

Thy words do speak thy soul, and such a soul,  
As wakes our wonder. Thou art free; thy brother

Shall be thine honour's pledge ; so will we use him,  
As thou art false, or true.

— E L I D U R U S.

I ask no other.

— A R V I R A G U S.

Thus then, my fellow soldier, to thy clasp  
I give the hand of friendship. Noble youth,  
We'll speed, or die together.

— C H O R U S.

Hear us, prince !  
Mona permits not, that he fight her battles,  
'Till duly purified : For, tho' his soul  
Took up unwittingly this deed of baseness,  
Yet is lustration meet. Learn, that in vice  
There is a noisome rankness unperceiv'd  
By gross corporeal sense, which so offends  
Heaven's pure divinities, as us the stench  
Of vapour wafted from sulphureous pool,  
Or pois'nous weed obscene. Hence doth the man,  
Who ev'n converses with a villain, need  
As much purgation, as the pallid wretch  
'Scap'd from the walls, where frowning pestilence  
Spreads wide her livid banners. For this cause,  
Ye Priests, conduct the youth to yonder grove,  
And do the needful rites.

[*Exeunt Priests with Elidurus.*]

Mean while ourself  
Will lead thee, prince, unto thy father's presence.  
— But hold, the king comes forth.

CARACTACUS, ARVIRAGUS, CHORUS,  
EVELINA.

My son! my son!

What joy, what transport, doth thine aged fire  
Feel in these filial foldings! Speak not, boy,  
Nor interrupt, that heart-felt ecstasy  
Should strike us mute. I know, what thou wouldst say,  
Yet prithee, peace. Thy sister's voice hath clear'd thee,  
And could excuse fine words at this blest moment,  
Trust me, I'd give it vent. But, 'tis enough,  
Thy father welcomes thee to him and honour:  
Honour, that now with rapt'rous certainty  
Calls thee his own true offspring. Dost thou weep?  
Ah, if thy tears swell not from joy's free spring,  
I beg thee, spare them: I have done thee wrong,  
Can make thee no atonement: None, alas!  
Thy father scarce can bless thee, as he ought;  
Unblest himself, beset with foes around,  
Bereft of queen, of kingdom, and of soldiers,  
He can but give thee portion of his dangers,  
Perchance and of his chains: Yet droop not, boy,  
Virtue is still thine own.

## ARVIRAGUS.

It is, my father;  
Pure as from thine illustrious fount it came;  
And that unsullied, let the world oppress us;  
Let fraud and falshood rivet fetters on us;  
Still shall our souls be free: Yet hope is ours,  
As well as virtue.



## C A R A C T A C U S.

Spoken like a Briton.

True, hope is ours, and therefore let's prepare :  
The moments now are precious. Tell us, Druid,  
Is it not meet, we see the bands drawn out,  
And mark their due array ?

## C H O R U S.

Monarch, ev'n now  
They skirt the grove.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Then let us to their front —

## C H O R U S.

But is the traitor-youth in safety lodg'd ?

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Druid, he fled —

## C H O R U S.

O fatal flight to Mona !

## C A R A C T A C U S.

But what of that ? Arviragus is here,  
My son is here, then let the traitor go,  
By this he has join'd the Romans : Let him join  
them,

A single arm, and that a villain's arm,  
Can lend but little aid to any powers  
Oppos'd to truth and virtue. Come, my son,  
Let's to the troops, and marshal them with speed.  
That done, we from these venerable men  
Will claim their ready blessing : Then to battle ;  
And the swift sun ev'n at his purple dawn  
Shall spy us crown'd with conquest, or with death.

[*Exeunt Caractacus and Arviragus.*]

## CHORUS, EVELINA.

What may his flight portend! Say, Evelina,  
How came this youth to 'scape?

## EVELINA.

And that to tell  
Will fix much blame on my impatient folly:  
For, ere your hallow'd lips had given permission,  
I flew with eager haste to bear my father  
News of his son's return. Enflam'd with that,  
Think, how a sister's zealous breast must glow!  
Your looks give mild assent. I glow'd indeed  
With the dear tale, and sped me in his ear  
To pour the precious tidings: But my tongue  
Scarce nam'd Arviragus, ere the false stranger  
(As I bethink me since) with stealthy pace  
Fled to the cavern's mouth.

## CHORUS.

The king pursued?

## EVELINA.

Alas! he mark'd him not, for 'twas the moment,  
When he had all to ask and all to fear,  
Touching my brother's valour. Hitherto  
His safety only, which but little mov'd him,  
Had reach'd his ears: But when my tongue unfolded  
The story of his bravery and his peril,  
O how the tears cours'd plenteous down his cheeks!  
How did he lift unto the heav'ns his hands  
In speechless transport! Yet he soon bethought him  
Of Rome's invasion, and with fiery glance

Survey'd the cavern round ; then snatch'd his spear,  
 And menac'd to pursue the flying traitor :  
 But I with prayers (O pardon, if they err'd)  
 Withheld his step, for to the left the youth  
 Had wing'd his way, where the thick underwood  
 Afforded sure retreat. Besides, if found,  
 Was age a match for youth ?

## C H O R U S.

Maiden, enough.  
 Better perchance for us, if he was captive :  
 But in the justice of their cause, and heav'n,  
 Do Mona's sons confide.

## BARD, CHORUS, ELIDURUS, EVELINA.

Druid, the rites  
 Are finish'd, all save that which crowns the rest,  
 And which pertains to thy blest hand alone :  
 For that he kneels before thee.

## C H O R U S.

Take him hence,  
 We may not trust him forth to fight our cause.

## E L I D U R U S.

Now by Andraffe's throne —

## C H O R U S.

Nay, swear not, youth,  
 The tie is broke, that held thy fealty :  
 Thy brother's fled.

## E L I D U R U S.

Fled !



CHORUS.

To the Romans fled.

Yes, thou hast cause to tremble.

ELIDURUS.

Ah, Vellinus!

Does thus our love, does thus our friendship end!

Was I thy brother, youth, and hast thou left me!

Yes; and how left me, cruel, as thou art,

The victim of thy crimes!

CHORUS.

True, thou must die.

ELIDURUS.

I pray ye then on your best mercy, fathers,

It may be speedy. I would fain be dead,

If this be life. Yet I must doubt ev'n that,

For falshood of this strange stupendous sort

Sets firm-ey'd reason on a gaze, mistrusting,

That what she sees in palpable plain form,

The stars in yon blue arch, these woods, these  
caverns,

Are all mere tricks of cozenage, nothing real,

The vision of a vision. If he's fled,

I ought to hate this brother.

CHORUS.

Yet thou dost not.

ELIDURUS.

But when astonishment will give me leave,

Perchance I shall.—And yet he is my brother,

And he was virtuous once. Yes, ye vile Romans;

Yes, I must die, before my thirsty sword

Drinks one rich drop of vengeance. Yet, ye robbers,

Yet will I curse you with my dying lips :

'Twas you, that stole away my brother's virtue.

CHORUS.

Now then prepare to die.

ELIDURUS.

I am prepar'd.

Yet, since I cannot now (what most I wish'd)

By manly prowess guard this lovely maid :

Permit, that on your holiest earth I kneel,

And pour one fervent prayer for her protection.

Allow me this, for tho' you think me false,

The gods will hear me.

EVELINA.

I can hold no longer !

O Druid, Druid, at thy feet I fall :

Yes, I must plead (away with virgin-blushes)

For such a youth must plead. I'll die to save him,

O take my life, and let him fight for Mona.

CHORUS.

Virgin, arise. His virtue hath redeem'd him,

And he shall fight for thee and for his country.

Youth, thank us with thy deeds. The time is short,

And now with reverence take our high lustration :

Thrice do we sprinkle thee with day-break dew

Shook from the May-thorn blossom; twice and thrice

Touch we thy forehead with our holy wand :

Now thou art fully purg'd. Now rise restor'd

To virtue and to us. Hence then, my son,

Hie thee to yonder altar, where our Bards  
 Shall arm thee duly both with helm and sword  
 For warlike enterprize. [*Exit Elidurus.*]

CARACTACUS, CHORUS, ARVIRAGUS,  
 EVELINA.

'Tis true, my son,  
 Bold are their bearings, and I fear me not  
 But they have hearts will not belie their looks.  
 I like them well. Yet would to righteous heav'n  
 Those valiant veterans, that on Snowdon guard  
 Their scanty pittance of bleak liberty,  
 Were here to join them: we would teach these  
 wolves,

Tho' we permit their rage to prowl our coasts,  
 That vengeance waits them ere they rob our altars.  
 Druid, all hail! we find thy valiant guards  
 Accoutred so, as well bespeaks the wisdom,  
 That fram'd their phalanx. We but wait thy blessing  
 To lead them 'gainst the foe.

CHORUS.

Caractacus!  
 Behold this sword: The sword of old Belinus,  
 Stain'd with the blood of giants, and it's name  
 TRIFINGUS. Many an age it's charmed blade  
 Has slept within yon consecrated trunk.  
 Lo, I unsheath it, king; I wave it o'er thee;  
 Mark, what portentous streams of scarlet light  
 Flow from the brandish'd falchion. On thy knee  
 Receive the sacred pledge.—And mark our words.  
 By the bright circle of the golden sun,



By the brief courses of the errant moon,  
 By the dread potency of every star  
 In the mysterious zodiac's burning girth,  
 By each, and all of these supernal signs,  
 We do adjure thee with this trusty blade,  
 To guard yon central oak, whose holy stem  
 Involves the spirit of high Taranis:  
 This be thy charge; to which in aid we join  
 Ourselves, and our sage brethren. With our vassals  
 Thy son and the Brigantian prince shall make  
 Incurſion on the foe.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

In this, and all,  
 Your holy will be done. Yet surely, Druid,  
 The fresh and active vigour of these youths  
 Might better suit with this important charge.  
 Not that my heart shrinks at the glorious task,  
 But will with ready zeal pour forth it's blood  
 Upon the sacred roots, my firmest courage  
 Might fail to save. Think, fathers, I am old;  
 And if I fell the foremost in the onset,  
 Should leave a son behind, might still defend you.

## C H O R U S.

The sacred adjuration we have utter'd  
 May never be recall'd.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Then be it so.  
 Yet do not think, I counsel this thro' fear:  
 Old as I am, I trust with half our powers  
 I could drive back these Romans to their ships;

# C A R A C T A C U S. 65

Dastards, that come as doth the cow'ring fowler  
To tangle me with snares and take me tamely ;  
Slaves, they shall find, that ere they gain their prey,  
They have to hunt it boldly with barb'd spears,  
And meet such conflict, as the chafed boar  
Gives to his stout assailants. O ye gods!  
That I might instant face them.

## CHORUS.

Be thy son's  
The onset.

## ARVIRAGUS.

From his soul that son doth thank ye,  
Blessing the wisdom, that preserves his father  
Thus to the last. O if the fav'ring gods  
Direct this arm, if their high will permit,  
I pour a prosperous vengeance on the foe,  
I ask for life no longer, than to crown  
The valiant task. Steel then, ye powers of heav'n,  
Steel my firm soul with your own fortitude,  
Free from alloy of passion. Give me courage,  
That knows not rage ; revenge, that knows not  
malice ;  
Let me not thirst for carnage, but for conquest :  
And conquest gain'd, sleep vengeance in my breast,  
Ere in it's sheath my sword.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

O hear his father !  
If ever rashness spur'd me on, great gods,  
To acts of danger thirsting for renown ;  
If ere my eager soul pursued it's course

Beyond just reason's limit, visit not  
 My faults on him. I am the thing, you made me,  
 Vindictive, bold, precipitate, and fierce:  
 But as you gave to him a milder mind,  
 O bless him, bless him with a milder fate!

## EVELINA.

Nor yet unheard let Evelina pour  
 Her pray'rs and tears. O hear a hapless maid,  
 That ev'n thro' half the years, her life has number'd,  
 Ev'n nine long years has drag'd a trembling being,  
 Beset with pains and perils. Give her peace;  
 And, to endear it more, be that blest peace  
 Won by her brother's sword. O bless his arm,  
 And bless his valiant followers, One, and all.

ELIDURUS *entering armed.*

Hear heav'n! and let this pure and virgin prayer  
 Plead ev'n for Elidurus, whose sad soul  
 Cannot look up to your immortal thrones,  
 And urge his own request: Else would he ask,  
 That all the dangers of th' approaching fight  
 Might fall on him alone: That every spear  
 The Romans wield might at his breast be aim'd;  
 Each arrow darted on his rattling helm;  
 That so the brother of this beauteous maid,  
 Returning safe with victory and peace,  
 Might bear them to her bosom.

## CHORUS.

Now rise all,  
 And heav'n, that knows, what most ye ought to ask,  
 Grant all ye ought to have. The stars on high



C A R A C T A C U S. 67

Are faded now, and darkness reigns o'er all.  
 Now is the dreadful hour, now will our torches  
 Glare with more livid horror, now our shrieks  
 And clanking arms will more appall the foe.  
 But heed, ye Bards, that for the sign of onset  
 Ye sound the antientest of all your rhymes,  
 Whose birth tradition notes not, nor who fram'd  
 It's lofty strains: The force of that high air  
 Did Julius feel, when, fir'd by it, our fathers  
 First drove him recreant to his ships; and ill  
 Had far'd his second landing, but that fate  
 Silenc'd the master Bard, who led the song.  
 Now forth, brave Pair! Go, with our blessing go;  
 Mute be the march, as ye ascend the hill:  
 Then, when ye hear the sound of our shrill trumpet,  
 Fall on the foe.

C A R A C T A C U S.  
 Now glory be thy guide;  
 Pride of my soul, go forth and conquer.

E V E L I N A.  
 Brother,  
 Yet one embrace. O thou much honour'd Stranger,  
 I charge thee fight by my dear brother's side,  
 And shield him from the foe; for he is brave,  
 And will with bold and well-directed arm  
 Return thy succour.

*[Exeunt Arviragus and Elidurus.]*

C H O R U S.  
 Now, ye Priests, with speed  
 Strew on the altar's height your sacred leaves,

And light the morning flame. But why is this?  
 Why doth our brother Mador snatch his harp  
 From yonder bough? why this way bend his step?

## C A R A C T A C U S.

He is entranc'd. The fillet bursts, that bound  
 His liberal locks; his snowy vestments fall  
 In ampler folds; and all his floating form  
 Doth seem to glisten with divinity!  
 Yet is he speechless. Say, thou Chief of Bards,  
 What is there in this airy vacancy,  
 That thou with fiery and irregular glance  
 Shouldst scan thus wildly? wherefore heaves thy  
 breast?

Why starts —

## O D E.

## I. 1.

H A R K! heard ye not yon footstep dread,  
 That shook the earth with thund'ring tread?  
 'Twas Death.—In haste  
 The Warrior past;  
 High tower'd his helmed head:  
 I mark'd his mail, I mark'd his shield,  
 I 'spy'd the sparkling of his spear,  
 I saw his giant-arm the falchion wield;  
 Wideway'd the bick'ring blade, and fir'd the angry air.

## I. 2.

On me (he cry'd) my Britons, wait.  
 To lead you to the field of fate  
 I come: Yon car,  
 That cleaves the air,  
 Descends to throne my state:

# CARACTACUS. 69

I mount your Champion and your God.  
My proud steeds neigh beneath the thong :  
Hark ! to my wheels of brass, that rattle loud !  
Hark ! to my \* clarion shrill, that brays the woods  
among !

1. 3.

Fear not now the fever's fire,  
Fear not now the death-bed groan,  
Pangs that torture, pains that tire,  
Bed-rid age with feeble moan :  
These domestic terrors wait  
Hourly at my palace gate ;  
And when o'er slothful realms my rod I wave,  
These on the tyrant king and coward slave  
Rush with vindictive rage, and drag them to their  
grave.

2. 1.

But you, my Sons, at this high hour  
Shall share the fulness of my power :  
From all your bows,  
In level'd rows,  
My own dread shafts shall shower.  
Go then to conquest, gladly go,  
Deal forth my dole of destiny,  
With all my fury dash the trembling foe  
Down to those darksome dens, where Rome's pale  
spectres lie,

2. 2.

Where creeps the ninefold stream profound  
Her black inexorable round,

\* Here one of the Druids blows the sacred trumpet.



70 C A R A C T A C U S.

And on the bank,  
To willows dank,  
The shivering ghosts are bound.  
Twelve thousand crescents all shall swell  
To full-orb'd pride, and all decline,  
Ere they again in life's gay mansions dwell :  
Not such the meed that crowns the sons of free-  
dom's line.

2. 3.

No, my Britons! battle slain,  
Rapture gilds your parting hour ;  
I, that all despotic reign,  
Claim but there a moment's power.  
Swiftly the soul of British flame  
Animates some kindred frame,  
Swiftly to life and light triumphant flies,  
Exults again in martial ecstasies,  
Again for freedom fights, again for freedom dies.

C A R A C T A C U S.

It does, it does! unconquer'd, undismaid,  
The British soul revives—Champion, lead on,  
I follow—give me way. Some blessed shaft  
Will rid me of this clog of cumb'rous age ;  
And I again shall in some happier mould  
Rise to redeem my country.

C H O R U S.

Stay thee, Prince,  
And mark what clear and amber-skirted clouds  
Rise from the altar's verge, and cleave the skies ;  
O 'tis a prosperous omen ! Soon expect  
To hear glad tidings.

C A R A C T A C U S.

I will send them to thee.

C H O R U S.

But see, a Bard approaches, and he bears them :  
Else is his eye no herald to his heart.

B A R D, C H O R U S, C A R A C T A C U S.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Speedily tell thy tale.

B A R D.

A tale like mine,  
I trust your ears will willingly pursue  
Thro' each glad circumstance. First, Monarch, learn,  
The Roman troop is fled.

C H O R U S.

Great gods, we thank ye!

C A R A C T A C U S.

Fought they not ere they fled? O tell me all.

B A R D.

Silent, as night, that wrapt us in her veil,  
We pac'd up yonder hill, whose woody ridge  
O'erhung the ambush'd foe. No sound was heard,  
Step felt, or sight descry'd : for safely hid,  
Beneath the purple pall of sacrifice  
Did sleep our holy fire, nor saw the air,  
'Till to that pass we came, where whilom Brute  
Planted his five hoar altars. To our rites  
Then swift we hasted, and in one short moment  
Each rocky pile was cloth'd with livid flame.  
Near each a white rob'd Druid, whose stern voice

Thunder'd deep execrations on the foe.  
 Now wak'd our horrid symphony, now all  
 Our harps terrific rang: Meanwhile the grove  
 Trembled, the altars shook, and thro' our ranks  
 Our sacred sisters rush'd in sable robes,  
 With hair-dishevel'd, and funereal brands  
 Hurl'd round with menacing fury. On they rush'd  
 In fierce and frantic mood, as is their wont  
 Amid the magic rites, they do to night  
 In our deep dens below. Motions like these  
 Were never dar'd before in open air!

## C H O R U S.

Did I not say we had a power within us,  
 That might appall ev'n Romans?

## B A R D.

And it did.  
 They stood agast, and to our vollied darts,  
 That thick as hail fell on their helms and corslets,  
 Scarce rais'd a warding shield. The sacred trumpet  
 Then rent the air, and instant at the signal  
 Rush'd down Arviragus with all our vassals;  
 A hot, but short-liv'd, conflict then ensued:  
 For soon they fled. I saw the Romans fly,  
 Before I left the field.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

My son pursued?

## B A R D.

The prince and Elidurus, like twin lions,  
 Did side by side engage. Death seem'd to guide  
 Their swords, no stroke fell fruitless, every wound  
 Gave him a victim.



## C A R A C T A C U S.

Thus my friend Ebrancus!

Ill-fated prince! didst thou and I in youth  
Unite our valours. In his prime he fell,  
On Conway's banks. I saw him fall, and slew  
His murderer.—But how far did they pursue?

## B A R D.

Ev'n to the ships: For I descry'd the rout,  
Far as the twilight gleam would aid my sight.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Now, thanks to the bright star that rul'd his  
birth;

Yes, he will soon return to claim my blessing,  
And he shall have it pour'd in tears of joy  
On his bold breast! methought, I heard a step:  
Is it not his?

## B A R D.

'Tis some of our own train,  
And, as I think, they lead six Romans captive.

## CHORUS, CARACTACUS, CAPTIVES.

My brethren, bear the prisoners to the cavern,  
'Till we demand them.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Pause ye yet a while.

They seem of bold demeanor, and have helms,  
That speak them leaders. Hear me, Romans, hear,  
That you are captives, is the chance of war:  
Yet captives as ye are, in Britain's eye

You are not slaves. Barbarians tho' you call us,  
 We know the native rights, man claims from man,  
 And therefore never shall we gall your necks  
 With chains, or drag you at our scythed cars  
 In arrogance of triumph. Nor 'till taught  
 By Rome (what Britain sure should scorn to learn)  
 Her avarice, will we barter ye for gold.

True ye are captives, and our country's safety  
 Forbids, we give you back to liberty :  
 We give ye therefore to the immortal gods,  
 To them we lift ye in the radiant cloud  
 Of sacrifice. They may in limbs of freedom  
 Replace your free-born souls, and their high mercy  
 Haply shall to some better world advance you ;  
 Or else in this restore that golden gift,  
 Which lost, leaves life a burden. Does there breathe  
 A wretch so 'pall'd with the vain fear of death  
 Can call this cruelty ? 'tis love, 'tis mercy,  
 And grant, ye gods, if ere I'm made a captive  
 I meet the like fair treatment from the foe,  
 Whose stronger star quells mine. Now lead them on,  
 And, while they live, treat them, as men should  
 men,

And not, as Rome treats Britain. [*Exeunt Captives.*  
 Druid, these,  
 Ev'n should their chief escape, may blaze to-morrow  
 Our gratitude——Whence was that shriek ?

EVELINA, CARACTACUS, CHORUS.

My father,  
Support me, take me trembling to your arms ;  
All is not well. Ah me, my fears o'ercome me !

C A R A C T A C U S.

What means my child ?

EVELINA.

Alas ! we are betray'd.  
Ev'n now, as wand'ring in yon eastern grove  
I call'd the gods to aid us, the dread sound  
Of many hasty steps did meet mine ear :  
This way they prest.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Daughter, thy fears are vain.

EVELINA.

Methought I saw the flame of lighted brands,  
And what did glitter to my dazzled sight,  
Like swords and helms.

C A R A C T A C U S.

All, all the feeble coinage  
Of maiden fear.

EVELINA.

Nay, if mine ear mistook not,  
I heard the traitor's voice, who that way 'scap'd,  
Calling to arms.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Away with idle terrors !  
Know, thy brave brother's crest is crown'd with  
conquest,



The Romans fled, their leaders are our captives,  
 Smile, my lov'd child, and imitate the sun,  
 That rises ruddy from behind yon oaks  
 To hail him victor.

## C H O R U S.

That the rising sun!  
 O horror! horror! sacrilegious fires  
 Devour our groves: They blaze, they blaze!  
 O sound  
 The trump again; recall the prince, or all  
 Is lost!

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Druid, where is thy fortitude?  
 Do not I live? Is not this holy sword  
 Firm in my grasp? I will preserve your groves.  
 Britons, I go: Let those, that dare die nobly,  
 Follow my step. *[Exit Caractacus.]*

## E V E L I N A.

O whither does he go?  
 Return, return: Ye holy men, recall him.  
 What is his arm against a host of Romans?  
 O I have lost a father!

## C H O R U S.

Ruthless gods!  
 Ye take away our souls: A general panic  
 Reigns thro' the grove. O fly, my brethren, fly,  
 To aid the king, fly to preserve your altars!  
 Alas! 'tis all in vain; our fate is fixt.  
 Look there, look there, thou miserable maid!  
 Behold thy bleeding brother,

ARVIRAGUS, ELIDURUS, EVELINA,  
CHORUS.

Thanks, good youth !  
 Safe hast thou brought me to that holy spot,  
 Where I did wish to die. Support me still.  
 O, I am sick to death. Yet one step more :  
 Now lay me gently down. I would drag out  
 This life, tho' at some cost of throbs and pangs,  
 Just long enough to claim my father's blessing,  
 And sigh my last breath in my sister's arms.  
 —And here she kneels, poor maid ! all dumb with  
 grief.

Restrain thy sorrow, gentlest Evelina,  
 True thou dost see me bleed ; I bleed to death.

## EVELINA.

Sayst thou to death ? O gods ! the barbed shaft  
 Is buried in his breast. Yes, he must die ;  
 And I, alas ! am doom'd to see him die.  
 Where are your healing arts, medicinal herbs,  
 Ye holy men, your wonder-working spells ?  
 Pluck me but out this shaft, staunch but this blood,  
 And I will call down blessings on your heads  
 With such a fervency—And can ye not !  
 Then let me beg you on my bended knee,  
 Give to my misery some opiate drug,  
 May shut up all my senses.—Yes, good fathers,  
 Mingle the potion so, that it may kill me  
 Just at the instant, this poor languisher  
 Heaves his last sigh.

ARVIRAGUS.

Talk not thus wildly, sister,  
Think on our father's age——

EVELINA.

Alas! my brother!  
We have no father now; or if we have,  
He is a captive.

ARVIRAGUS.

Captive! O my wound!  
It stings me now——But is it so?

*[turning to the Chorus.]*

CHORUS.

Alas!  
We know no more, save that he sallied single  
To meet the foe, whose unexpected host  
Round by the east had wound their fraudulent march,  
And fir'd our groves.

ELIDURUS.

O fatal, 'fatal valour!  
Then is he seiz'd, or slain.

ARVIRAGUS.

Too sure he is!  
Druid, not half the Romans met our swords;  
We found the fraud too late: the rest are yonder.

CHORUS.

How could they gain the pass?

ARVIRAGUS.

The wretch, that fled  
That way, return'd, conducting half their powers;  
And——But thy pardon, youth, I will not wound thee,  
He is thy brother,



ELIDURUS.

Thus my honest sword  
Shall force the blood from the detested heart,  
That holds alliance with him.

ARVIRAGUS.

Elidurus,  
Hold, on our friendship, hold. Thou noble youth,  
Look on this innocent maid. She must to Rome,  
Captive to Rome. Thou seest warm life flow  
from me,  
Ere long she'll have no brother. Heav'n's my  
witness,  
I do not wish, that thou shouldst live the slave  
Of Rome: But yet she is my sister.

ELIDURUS.

Prince,  
Thou urgest that, might make me drag an age  
In fetters worse than Roman. I will live,  
And while I live ———

*Enter* BARD.

Fly to your caverns, Druids,  
The grove's beset around. The chief approaches.

CHORUS.

Let him approach, we will confront his pride,  
The chief that rules amid the groves of Mona  
Has not to fear his fury. What tho' age  
Slackens our sinews; what tho' shield, and sword  
Give not their iron aid to guard our body;

ARVIRAGUS.

Talk not thus wildly, sister,  
Think on our father's age——

EVELINA.

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Slackens our sinews; what tho' shield, and sword  
Give not their iron aid to guard our body;



Yet virtue arms our soul, and 'gainst that panoply  
What 'vails the rage of robbers. Let him come.

## ARVIRAGUS.

I faint apace.—Ye venerable men,  
If ye can save this body from pollution,  
If ye can tomb me in this sacred place,  
I trust, ye will. I fought to save these groves,  
And, fruitless tho' I fought, some grateful oak,  
I trust, will spread it's reverential gloom  
O'er my pale ashes—Ah! that pang was death!  
My sister, Oh! ————— [dies.

## ELIDURUS.

She faints! Ah raise her! —————

## EVELINA.

Yes,

Now he is dead. I felt his spirit go  
In a cold sigh, and as it past, methought  
It paus'd a while, and trembled on my lips!  
Take me not from him: Breathless as he is,  
He is my brother still, and if the gods  
Do please to grace him with some happier being,  
They ne'er can give to him a fonder sister.

## CHORUS.

Brethren, surround the corse, and, ere the foe  
Approaches, chaunt with meet solemnity  
That grateful dirge your dying champion claims.

## SEMICHORUS.

Lo, where incumbent o'er the shade  
Rome's ravening eagle bows her beaked head!  
Yet while a moment fate affords,  
While yet a moment freedom stays,

That moment, which outweighs  
 Eternity's unmeasur'd hoards,  
 Shall Mona's grateful Bards employ  
 To hymn their godlike Hero to the sky.

## S E M I C H O R U S.

Ring out, ye mortal strings;  
 Answer thou heav'nly harp, instinct with spirit all,  
 That o'er the jasper arch self-warbling swings  
 Of blest Andraсте's throne:  
 Thy sacred sounds alone  
 Can celebrate the fall  
 Of bold Arviragus—[*Enter Aulus Didius and Romans.*

AULUS DIDIUS, CHORUS, EVELINA,  
ELIDURUS.

Ye bloody priests,  
 Behold, we burst on your infernal rites,  
 And bid ye pause. Instant restore our soldiers,  
 Nor hope that superstition's ruthless step  
 Shall wade in Roman gore. Ye savage men,  
 Did not our laws give licence to all faiths,  
 We would o'erturn your altars, headlong heave  
 These shapeless symbols of your barbarous gods,  
 And let the golden sun into your caves.

## C H O R U S.

Servant of Cæsar, has thine impious tongue  
 Spent the black venom of thy blasphemy?  
 It has. Then take our curses on thine head,  
 Ev'n his fell curses, who doth reign in Mona,  
 Vicegerent of those gods thy pride insults.

AULUS DIDIDIUS.

Bold priest, I scorn thy curses, and thyself.  
 Soldiers, go search the caves, and free the prisoners.  
 Take heed, you seize Caractacus alive.  
 Arrest yon youth; load him with heaviest irons,  
 He shall to Cæsar answer for his crime.

ELIDURUS.

I stand prepar'd to triumph in my crime.

AULUS DIDIDIUS.

'Tis well, proud boy ——  
 Look to the beauteous maid, *[to the soldiers.]*  
 That tranc'd in grief, bends o'er yon bleeding  
 corse,  
 Respect her sorrows.

EVELINA.

Hence ye barbarous men,  
 Ye shall not take him weltring thus in blood,  
 To shew at Róme, what British virtue was.  
 Avaunt! The breathless body that you touch  
 Was once Arviragus!

AULUS DIDIDIUS.

Fear us not, princess,  
 We reverence the dead.

CHORUS.

Would too to heav'n,  
 Ye reverenc'd the gods but ev'n enough  
 Not to debase with slavery's cruel chain,  
 What they created free.

AULUS DIDIDIUS.

The Romans fight  
 Not to enslave, but humanize the world.



CHORUS.

Go too, we will not parley with thee, Roman :  
Instant pronounce our doom.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Hear it, and thank us.

This once our clemency shall spare your groves,  
If at our call ye yield the British king :  
Yet learn, when next ye aid the foes of Cæsar,  
That each old oak, whose solemn gloom ye boast,  
Shall bow beneath our axes.

CHORUS.

Be they blasted,  
Whene'er their shade forgets to shelter virtue.

*Enter* BARD.

Mourn, Mona, mourn. Caractacus is captive !  
And dost thou smile, false Roman ? do not think  
He fell an easy prey. Know, ere he yielded,  
Thy bravest veterans bled. He too, thy spy,  
The base Brigantian prince, hath seal'd his fraud  
With death. Bursting thro' armed ranks, that  
hemm'd

The caitiff round, the brave Caractacus  
Seiz'd his false throat ; and as he gave him death  
Indignant thunder'd, ' Thus is my last stroke  
' The stroke of justice.' Numbers then oppress him :  
I saw the slave, that cowardly behind  
Pinion'd his arms ; I saw the sacred sword  
Writh'd from his grasp : I saw, what now ye see,  
Inglorious sight ! those barbarous bonds upon him.

CARACTACUS, AULUS DIDIUS,  
CHORUS, &c.

Romans, methinks the malice of your tyrant  
Might furnish heavier chains. Old as I am  
And wither'd as ye see these war-worn limbs,  
Trust me, they shall support the weightiest load  
Injustice dares impose.

Proud-crested soldier! *[to Didius.]*

Who seemst the master-mover in this business,  
Say, dost thou read less terror on my brow,  
Than when thou met'st me in the fields of war  
Heading my nations? No, my free-born soul  
Has scorn still left to sparkle thro' these eyes,  
And frown defiance on thee.

Is it thus!

*[seeing his son's body.]*

Then I'm indeed a captive. Mighty gods!

My soul, my soul submits: Patient it bears  
The pond'rous load of grief ye heap upon it.  
Yes, it will grovel in this shatter'd breast,  
And be the sad tame thing, it ought to be  
Coopt in a servile body.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Droop not, king.

When Claudius, the great master of the world,  
Shall hear the noble story of thy valour,  
His pity —

CARACTACUS.

Can a Roman pity, soldier?

And if he can, gods! must a Briton bear it?

Arviragus, my bold, my breathless boy,  
Thou hast escap'd such pity : thou art free.  
Here in high Mona shall thy noble limbs  
Rest in a noble grave ; posterity  
Shall to thy tomb with annual reverence bring  
Sepulchral stones, and pile them to the clouds :  
Whilst mine ———

## AULUS DIDIUS.

The morn doth hasten our departure.  
Prepare thee, king, to go : A fav'ring gale  
Now swells our sails.

## C A R A C T A C U S.

Inhuman, that thou art !  
Dost thou deny a moment for a father  
To shed a few warm tears o'er his dead son ?  
I tell thee, chief, this act might claim a life  
To do it duly ; even a longer life,  
Than sorrow ever suffer'd. Cruel man !  
And thou deniest me moments. Be it so.  
I know you Romans weep not for your children ;  
You triumph o'er your tears, and think it valour :  
I triumph in my tears. Yes, best-lov'd boy,  
Yes, I can weep, can fall upon thy corse,  
And I can tear my hairs, these few grey hairs,  
The only honours war and age have left me.  
Ah son ! thou mightst have rul'd o'er many nations,  
As did thy royal ancestry : But I,  
Rash that I was, ne'er knew the golden curb  
Discretion hangs on brav'ry : Else perchance  
These men, that fasten fetters on thy father,  
Had su'd to him for peace, and claim'd his friendship.



AULUS DIDIUS.

But thou wast still implacable to Rome,  
And scorn'd her friendship.

CARACTACUS *starting up from the body.*

Soldier, I had arms,  
Had neighing steeds to whirl my iron cars,  
Had wealth, dominion. Dost thou wonder, Roman,  
I fought to save them? What if Cæsar aims  
To lord it universal o'er the world,  
Shall the world tamely crouch at Cæsar's footstool?

AULUS DIDIUS.

Read in thy fate our answer. Yet if sooner  
Thy pride had yielded —

CARACTACUS.

Thank thy gods, I did not.  
Had it been so, the glory of thy master,  
Like my misfortunes, had been short and trivial,  
Oblivion's ready prey: Now after struggling  
Nine years, and that right bravely 'gainst a tyrant,  
I am his slave to treat as seems him good;  
If cruelly, 'twill be an easy task  
To bow a wretch, alas! how bow'd already!  
Down to the dust: If well, his clemency,  
When trick'd and varnish'd by your glossing pen-  
men,  
Will shine in honour's annals, and adorn  
Himself; it boots not me. Look there, look there,  
The slave that shot that dart, left not a hope  
For lost Caractacus! Arise, my daughter.  
Alas! poor prince; art thou too in vile fetters?

[to Elidurus.]

Come hither, youth: Be thou to me a son,  
 To her a brother. Thus with trembling arms  
 I lead ye forth; children, we go to Rome.  
 Weepst thou, my girl? I prithee hoard thy tears  
 For the sad meeting of thy captive mother:  
 For we have much to tell her, much to say  
 Of these good men, who nurtur'd us in Mona;  
 Much of the fraud and malice, that pursued us;  
 Much of her son, who pour'd his precious blood  
 To save his sire and sister: Thinkst thou, maid,  
 Her gentleness can hear the tale, and live?  
 And yet she must. O gods, I grow a talker!  
 Grief and old age are ever full of words:  
 But I'll be mute. Adieu! ye holy men;  
 Yet one look more—Now lead us hence for ever.

THE END.

Come hither, youth: be thou to me a son,  
 To a brother: I was with thee in thy youth,  
 I led ye forth: children, we go to Rome.  
 We go! thou, my girl? I bring thee home thy tears  
 For the last meeting of thy native land.  
 For we have much to tell thy mother to-day.  
 Of these good men, who nurtured us in youth,  
 Much of the trial and toils, that pursued us,  
 Much of her love, who bore us through blood  
 To save his life and sister: I think thou, maid,  
 Her gentleness can hear the tale, and live?  
 And yet the mother! O good! I grow a talker!  
 Grief and old age are with me of words.  
 But I'll be mute. Adieu! ye holy men,  
 Yet one look more—now find us hence for ever.

THE END



## ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE few following quotations, from ancient authors, are here thrown together, in order to support and explain some passages in the Drama, that respect the manners of the Druids; and which, the general account of their customs, to be found in our histories of Britain, does not include.

Page 2. v. 15.

On the left,

Reside the \* sages skill'd in nature's lore :

\* i. e. The Euvates; one of the three classes of the Druids, according to Am. Marcellinus. *Studia liberalium doctrinarum inchoata per Bardos, Euvates, & Druidas.* This class, Strabo tells us, had the care of the sacrifices, and studied natural philosophy; which here, by *the changeful universe*, is shewn to be on Pythagorean principles. Whenever the *Priests* are mentioned in the subsequent parts of the Drama, this order of men is intended to be meant, as distinguished from the Druids and Bards.

Page 7. v. 7.

Thou shalt live;

Yet shalt thou live an interdicted wretch,

All rights of nature cancell'd.

Alluding to the Druidical power of excommunication, mentioned by Cæsar. *Si quis aut privatus, aut publicus, eorum decreto non stetit, sacri-*

N

ficiis interdicunt. Hæc poena apud eos est gravissima. Quibus ita est interdictum, ii numero impiorum ac sceleratorum habentur—neque iis petentibus jus redditur, neque honos ullis communicatur. C. Comment. Lib. vi.

Page 18. v. 2.

Are the milk-white steers prepar'd?

In the minute description which Pliny gives us of the ceremony of gathering the milletoe, he tells us, they sacrificed two white bulls. See Pliny's Natural History, L. 16. c. 24. which Drayton, in his Polyolbion, thus versifies.

Sometimes within my shades, in many an ancient wood.

Whole often-twined tops great Phœbus' fires withstood,

The fearless British priests, under an aged oak,  
Taking a milk-white bull, unstrained with the yoke,

And with an ax of gold, from that Jove-sacred tree

The milletoe cut down; then with a bended knee  
On th' unhew'd altar laid, put to the hallow'd fires;  
And whilst in the sharp flame the trembling flesh expires,

As their strong fury mov'd (when all the rest adore)

Pronouncing their desires the sacrifice before,  
Up to th' eternal heav'n their bloodied hands did rear:

And whilst the murm'ring woods ev'n shudder'd as with fear,

Preach'd to the beardless youth the soul's immortal state;

To other bodies still how it should transmute;  
That to contempt of death them strongly did  
excite. Ninth Song.

Page 10. v. 19.

Where our matron sister dwells.

The existence of female Druids seems ascertained by Tacitus, in his description of the final destruction of Mona by Paulinus Suetonius. *Stabat pro litore diversa acies densa armis virisque intercurfantibus fœminis, &c.* Also by the known story of Dioclesian, on which Fletcher formed a play, called the Prophetess.

Page 10. v. 21.

And the potent adder-stone.

The ovum anguinum, or serpent's egg; a famous Druidical amulet, thus circumstantially described by Pliny. — *Præterea est ovorum genus in magna Galliarum fama, omissum Græcis. Angues innumeri æstate convoluti, salivis faucium corporumque spumis artifice complexu glomerantur; anguinum appellatur. Druidæ sibilis id dicunt in sublime jactari, sagoque oportere intercipi, ne tellurem attingat. Profugere raptorem equo, serpentes enim insequi, donec arceantur amnis alicujus interventu, &c.* Nat. Hist. Lib. xxix. c. 3.

There are remains of this superstition still, both in the north and west parts of our island. For Lhwyd, the author of the *Archeologia*, writes thus to Rowland; see *Mona Antiqua*, p. 338. “The  
“ Druid doctrine about the *Glain Neidr*, obtains  
“ very much thro’ all Scotland, as well lowlands



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“ as highlands; but there is not a word of it in  
 “ this kingdom (Ireland); where, as there are no  
 “ snakes, they could not propagate it. Besides  
 “ snake-stones, the highlanders have their snail-  
 “ stones, paddock-stones, &c. to all which they  
 “ attribute their several virtues, and wear them as  
 “ amulets.” And in another letter he writes, “ The  
 “ Cornish retain variety of charms, and have still,  
 “ towards the land’s-end, the amulet of Maen  
 “ Magal, and Glain Neidr, which latter they call  
 “ a Milpreu, or Melpreu, and have a charm for  
 “ the snake to make it, when they have found  
 “ one asleep, and struck a hazel wand in the centre  
 “ of her spires.”

Page 25. v. 5.

Have the milk-white steeds  
 Unrein’d, and, neighing, pranc’d with fa-  
 v’ring steps.

The few and imperfect accounts antiquity gives us of ceremonies, &c. which are unquestionably Druidical, makes it necessary in this, and in other places of the Drama, to have recourse to Tacitus’s account of the Germans, amongst whom, if there were really no established Druids, there was certainly a great correspondency, in religious opinions, with the Gauls and Britons. The passage here alluded to is taken from his 10th chapter. *Proprium gentis, equorumque quoque præfagia ac monitus experiri. Publice aluntur iisdem nemoribus ac lucis, candidi & nullo mortali opere contacti, quos pressos sacro curru, sacerdos ac rex, vel princeps civitatis comitantur, hinnitus & fremitus observant, nec ulli auspicio major fides non solum apud plebem, sed apud procures, apud sacerdotes.*

Page 26. v. 2.

Thou art a king, a sov'reign o'er frail man :  
I am a Druid, servant of the gods.  
Such service is above such sovereignty.

The supreme authority of the Druids over their kings, is thus ascertained by Dion. Chrysostom.

Κελτοι δε ους ονομαζουσι Δρυιδας, και τatus περι Μαν-  
τικην οντας και την αλλην σοφίαν, ων ανευ, τοις βασι-  
λευσιν υδεν εξην πραττειν, υδε βυλεσθαι, ωστε το μεν αλη-  
θες εκεινως αρχειν, τους δε βασιλεας, αυτων υπηρετας και  
διακονους γινεσθαι της γνωμης, εν θρονοις καθημενους, και  
οικιας μεγαλας οικουτας, και πολυτιμως ευωχουμενους.  
Helmodus also de Slavis, l. ii. c. 12. asserts, Rex  
apud eos modicæ est æstimationis in comparatione  
flaminis.

Page 26. v. 17.

The time shall come, when destiny and  
death

Thron'd in a burning car.

Strabo, and other writers, tell us, the Druids  
taught, that the world was finally to be destroyed  
by fire, upon which this allegory is founded.

Page 34. v. I.

The gods, my brethren,  
Have wak'd these doubts in the untainted  
breast

Of this mild maiden.

Inesse enim sanctum quid & providum fœminis  
putant. Nec aut consilia ipsorum aspernantur, aut  
responsa negant. Tac. de morib. Germ. and Strabo  
to the like purpose, l. vii. Απαντες γαρ της δεισι-  
δαιμονιας αρχηγης οιδονται τας γυναικας.

Page 38. v. 13.

Behold yon huge  
And unhewn sphere of living adamant.

This is meant to describe the rocking-stone, of which there are several still to be seen in Wales, Cornwall, and Derbyshire. They are universally thought, by antiquarians, to be Druid monuments; and Mr Toland thinks, "that the Druids made the people believe that they only could move them, and that by a miracle, by which they condemned or acquitted the accused, and often brought criminals to confess what could in no other way be extorted from them." 'Twas this conjecture which gave the hint for this piece of machinery. The reader may find a description of one of these rocking-stones in Camden's Britannia, in his account of Pembrokeshire; and also several in Borlase's history of Cornwall.

Page 63. v. 19.

— And it's name  
TRIFINGUS.

The name of the enchanted sword in the Her-  
varer Saga.

Page 63. v. 25.

By the bright circle of the golden sun.

This adjuration is taken from the literal form of the old Druidical oath, which they administered to their disciples; and which the learned Selden, in Prolog. de Diis Syr. gives us from Vettius Valens Antiochenus, l. vii. It is as follows: Εὐτυχεύοντες ὀρχίζω ΗΑΙΟΥ μὲν ἱερὸν κύκλον καὶ ΣΕΛΗΝΗΣ ἀνι-  
μῶδες ὄρομας τῶν τε λοιπῶν ἀστέρων δύναμεις καὶ κύκλον  
ΔΤΟΚΑΙΔΕΚΑ ΖΩΔΙΩΝ ἐν ἀποχευφαῖς ταῦτα



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εχειν και τοις ἀπειθευσις η ἀπειθευσις μη μεταδιδουαι,  
τιμην τε και μνημην τω εισηγησασμενω απορριψεν, &c.

Page 71. v. 20.

Near each a white-rob'd Druid, whose  
stern voice  
Thunder'd deep execrations on the foe.

This account is taken from what history tells us did really happen some years after, when the groves of Mona were destroyed by Suetonius Paulinus. *Igitur Monam insulam incolis validam, & receptaculum perfugarum aggredi parat, navesque fabricatur plano alveo, adversus breve litus & incertum. Sic Pedes; equites vado secuti, aut altiores inter undas, adnantes equis transmisere. Stabat pro litore diversa acies densa armis virisque, intercusantibus foeminis: in modum Furiarum, veste ferali crinibus dejectis faces praeferebant. Druidae circum, preces diras sublati ad coelum manibus fundentes, novitate aspectus perculere milites ut quasi haerentibus membris, immobile corpus vulneribus praerberent. Dein cohortationibus ducis, & se ipsi stimulantibus ne muliebri & fanaticum agmen pavescerent, inferunt signa, sternuntque obvios & igni suo involvunt. Tac. Ann. l. xiv. c. 29.*

Page 81. v. 19.

These shapeless symbols of your barbarous  
gods.

The Druids did not really worship the divinity under any symbol. But this is put intentionally into the mouth of the Roman, as mistaking the rude stones placed round the grove, for idols. Thus Lucan in his beautiful description of a Druid grove,

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— simulacraque mœsta deorum

Arte carent cæsisque extant informia truncis.

Phar. Lib. iii.

Some imagery from the same description is also borrowed in the opening of the Drama.

Page 86. v. 3.

— Soldier I had arms,

This passage, and some others in this scene, are taken from Caractacus's famous speech in Tacitus, before the throne of Claudius; but here adapted to his dramatic character.



These symbols of your nation's  
Gods

The British did not really worship the divine  
symbols. But this is the intention  
into the mouth of the Roman, as it is  
into the mouth of the British, to show  
that the British are not really worshippers of  
the British in the British religion of the British  
Gods.

